



TODAY

COSTUME DRAMA

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CONFESIONS OF AN MP'S WIFE

Linda McDougall on waiting for E-Day WEEKEND

MONDAY

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Police may face Bridgewater trial

Cheers in court for freedom after 18 lost years

BY RICHARD FORD AND STEPHEN FARRELL

TWO former police officers may face criminal charges after three men jailed for murdering Carl Bridgewater were freed yesterday amid allegations of "serious, substantial and widespread police malpractice".

The detectives allegedly forged a confession which was instrumental in bringing the men to trial and sending them to prison for 18 years, and yesterday the Crown accepted that newly discovered scientific evidence left the prosecution case "fundamentally flawed."

Tumultuous applause and cheering greeted Vincent Hickey, his cousin Michael and James Robinson as they appeared in the dock at the Court of Appeal. They were released on unconditional bail pending a full hearing in April, when their convictions will almost certainly be quashed. Patrick Molloy, who was convicted with them, died in prison in 1983 still protesting his innocence.

After the hearing, as the Prime Minister said that he expected an inquiry into the original convictions and within the West Midlands police, the men denounced the criminal justice system.

Vincent Hickey, still wearing prison clothes, told a press conference: "Not only have the police been vicious and deceitful by keeping innocent men in prison, far worse, after having a child killed, they have deceived Mr and Mrs Bridgewater."

The men's freedom hinged on the discovery this month of scientific evidence proving for the first time the existence of the bogus confession statement, purportedly made by Vincent Hickey but allegedly concocted by the police, which Molloy had claimed was used to trick him into

admitting the crime. Without Molloy's confession, the Crown would have had no case, Lord Justice Roth said yesterday.

Later, Robinson renewed the attack on the West Midlands police. "It was not a case of one rotten apple in the barrel, they were all rotten. You had to be rotten to get into the barrel. It wasn't about over-zealous policemen thinking they had the right guys, it was a concerted conspiracy."

One of the three officers named in court, Graham Leake, now works as a security guard. He refused to comment on the Court of Appeal hearing at which the police operation was branded "dishonest and deceitful". Another of the officers allegedly involved, Detective Constable John Perkins, died two years ago.

Michael Mansfield, QC, for



Freedom at last: Ann Whelan (left) hugs her son Michael Hickey outside the High Court. Beside them are Anne Skeet with her son Vincent Hickey and Jimmy Robinson

Key evidence was hidden for years

BY RICHARD FORD AND STEPHEN FARRELL

ed: "We are fortunate. Me and Mike have got the best mums in the world."

Robinson said that only Mrs Whelan had kept up their spirits. "That woman there is four foot and she and our solicitor have told people who didn't want to know. They were long lonely years, we have cried with despair and people have looked at us with contempt in their eyes for killing a kid. I am not bitter but I am angry it has taken so long. This is not new evidence, it is stuff that has been there from day one."

Nick Molloy, the son of

Patrick Molloy, said: "I feel

very sad. It's great to see these

men today. I salute the heroes

— these men. They have

courage, true courage. Look at

poor old Hanratty, and Iris

Bentley who has just died. If

the hang-em-all brigade had

had their way, we wouldn't be

here today."

Mrs Whelan was glad that

the battle was over, but she

remained angry that the men

had suffered years of mental

and physical abuse. "I was

very much on my own for

years," she said. "But I just

fought and fought and fought.

The worst time was when

people refused to listen. The

authorities knew they were

innocent, but they didn't want

to hear. There is still a lot of

fighting to be done, but Mich

ael now needs time to think."

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show if documents have been

tampered with or reveal im-

pressions left from earlier

sheets of paper — technology

not available when the men

were sentenced — but the only

imprints the scientists found

were consistent with those that

one would expect to find on a

document taken from a stack

of witness statements.

"They found impressions of

a familiar caption which one

finds at the beginning of every

statement under caution.

There was nothing in the least

surprising about finding that

there, Jeremy Roberts, QC,

for the Crown, said yesterday.

Most of the imprints had

disappeared with handling over the years, but a few words were protected by the exhibit label on the front page.

They showed that the state-

ment whose imprint appeared

on the document had been in

the name of Vincent Hickey

and carried his signature.

Molloy, whose confession

was crucial to the conviction of

all the men, has always insist-

ed that he was tricked into his

admission when the police

showed him a confession al-

legedly made by Hickey.

What Radley and Hard-

castle did not know was that

Hickey was interviewed in

Redditch police station, 25

miles away from Molloy, and

any statement he made could

not have been written on the

same pad as Molloy's.

The importance of the

Continued on page 7, col 8

Anger as German paper refers to 'the Jew Rifkind'

BY ROGER BOYES IN BERLIN AND PHILIP WEBSTER

A GERMAN newspaper which is closely aligned to Helmut Kohl, yesterday stood by its description of the Foreign Secretary as "the Jew Rifkind" and the writer of the article expressed amazement that the words could have been interpreted as a slur.

As a storm of protest greeted the remark in the solemn *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, its author defended her choice of words. "It is an insult

to the Foreign Office," Mr Rifkind told the paper. "It is an insult to the Foreign Secretary. It is an insult to the Foreign Office."

The Foreign Office speechwriters used the words to underline the force of the Foreign Secretary's convictions.

But the newspaper read the quotation differently: as a coded protest against the words (urging Germany to abandon its federal European ambitions) that he had just spoken.

Mr Rifkind said: "I was only

trying to underline how surprising it was that somebody who is Jewish should quote the leading German Protestant reformer."

Mr Rifkind's family left Lithuania in 1899.

Although the use of the expression "the Jew" is not as jarring in German as in English, nonetheless it has a strange ring, especially for older readers. Nazi newspapers in the 1930s prefaced almost any description of leading liberal politicians with "the Jew" even if the person had long ago abandoned his religion.

The point of course is that Mr Rifkind, even when quoting Martin Luther, was speaking as British Foreign Secretary and not as a Jew, Catholic or Buddhist," said a senior British official who attended the lecture. "The real question is why [the newspaper] allowed such a phrase to stay in their columns."

At least two of the newspaper's board of publishers are regarded as tough conservatives who can on occasion be deeply critical of British politics and the British media. A year ago the newspaper published a "disgusting and terrible" trade

Sam Kiley, Africa correspond-

ent of *The Times*, was

named Foreign Correspond-

ent of the Year yesterday at

the BBC's *What the Paper's*

Say Awards. Mr Kiley, 32,

who joined *The Times* as a

trainee in 1987, was com-

missioned for his reports from

Rwanda. The judges praised

"the chastening clarity of his

reports from one of the

world's least manageable

zones". Page 2

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Catwalk kittens take controversy in their stride



Uniform appearance: Eva Arnold, left, and Charlene O'Haire dressed in their school clothes

BY DAREH GREGORIAN
AND GRACE BRADBERRY

SCHOOLGIRLS who will star in Vivienne Westwood's fashion show tomorrow — one of them as young as 13 — are not letting controversy wear them down.

While Lady Olga Maitland, the MP and a sponsor of the Conservative Family Campaign, said that 20 girls aged 13 to 17 acting as models was "frankly not right", 15-year-old Eva Arnold maintained there was no cause for alarm.

While some of Ms Westwood's designs were, Eva agreed, "quite raunchy", the clothes in which she would appear for the start of London Fashion Week were not. Ms Westwood, who is known for provocative designs, including rubber skirts and fake-fur G-strings, will feature the girls in a mock debutantes' ball at the Dorchester.

The girls were recruited from model agencies and two drama schools, the Sylvia Young Theatre School and The Arts Educational School, London.

Charlotte, the 13-year-old, is a professional model chosen from the books of Spiral Model Agency, which also represents Jodie Kidd, whose extremely thin appearance caused comment two years ago.

Jonathan Phang, who manages Charlotte and Jodie Kidd, said:

"The reason I'm letting her do this show is because all the girls who are doing it are young."

Eva's fellow pupils from The Arts Educational School, Sarah Watkins, 17, and Charlene O'Haire, 16, said there was no need for controversy, Eva's mother Lynn said that she was delighted Eva was in the show, although she admitted that she had had some worries.

"It's a concern when your daughter is quite young," Mrs Arnold said. "My main concern is that it focuses on image more than spirit and soul. Young people are under a terrible pressure when it comes to image. But I trust Eva. I think she's sensible."

Westwood's show comes after complaints that the fashion industry exploits schoolgirls. Lady Olga, MP for Sutton and Cheam, said: "I totally disapprove of young girls being used for this kind of show. To abuse teenagers because they look innocent is frankly not right. There are perfectly suitable adult models, so there is just no need for this. I think it's quite awful."

Wayne Hemingway, the chairman and founder of the fashion company Red Or Dead, which is also showing at the fashion week, said: "It's a question of where you draw the line. I think the collection that Vivienne is showing is

for young people, and so using young models is perfectly all right. The only time there would be a problem is if young girls were wearing clothes that were sexy or exposing flesh or midriff."

Lella Cerullo, a spokeswoman for the Ms Westwood, said: "We're not putting the girls into the show to cause a sensation. We want to prove a point that a young girl can look chic and sophisticated. Young people love to dress like rebels, but they all wind up dressing like each other. These days, looking prim is rebellious." Miss Cerullo said the girls would wear "lovely tailored suits".

However, Westwood's managing director, the Italian businessman Carlo D'Amato, said: "The collection is very sexy. What else do you expect of Vivienne?"

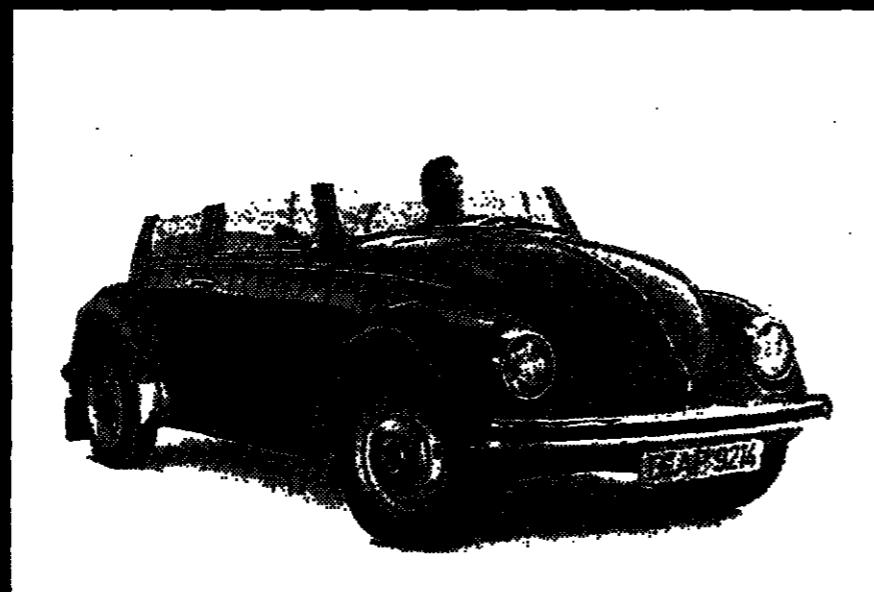
For the audition, the girls of The Arts Educational School were asked to wear dance leotards and to walk the length of the school hall. Brenda Gray, the school's registrar, said the show's organisers wanted girls between the ages of 14 and 18. "They wanted tall, slim, typical English rose types. As long as the clothing is suitable, it will be a good experience for them."

Vivienne Westwood made her name in the 1970s, when she and her partner Malcolm McLaren opened a boutique.



Role models: Eva and Charlene sampling Vivienne Westwood outfits at Liberty's in central London

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Water experts demand a ban on new homes

BY NICK NUTTALL, ENVIRONMENT CORRESPONDENT

WATER resources are so stretched that no more houses should be built in part of the South and East of Britain, experts in the industry said yesterday.

Ray Tennant, chairman of the Water Companies Association, insisted the projected need for 4.4 million new households by 2016 could prove a disaster in areas such as Hampshire, east and west Sussex, Kent and East Anglia.

"Certainly in areas like East and West Sussex we will find it difficult to supply new townships. There are no major rivers and most water comes from boreholes in the South Downs which are being fully exploited," he said. The Association will be objecting to future schemes and were already holding urgent talks with county planning chiefs across southern England.

Mr Tennant, who is a director of Mid Southern and South East Water, said projects were already in the pipeline which were causing alarm. "There are proposals for a township of 10,000 properties between Lewis and Eastbourne. In north Hampshire there are plans for a new town," he said.

"Every new home needs one, two, maybe three toilets, a

new garden and a new car that needs washing."

The fears over the Government's new household projections come in advance of a meeting on Monday, organised by the WCA, which represents the smaller water supply firms. The meeting is aimed at solving Britain's water problems into the next century.

"We cannot run businesses the way we are at the moment, constantly on the edge of a crisis," said Mr Tennant. The meeting has secured the backing of the Environment Agency, environmental groups who fear Britain's wetlands and rivers are being run dry by a combination of heavy abstraction and surging demand, and all 27 of the water companies in England and Wales.

It follows several dry years and forecasts that global warming will make water even more scarce.

Mike Walker, the WCA's head of policy, said that the time had come to draft a national strategy which balanced the interest of consumers, government, green groups and water companies.

The WCA also wants a study into the need for new reservoirs and underground storage systems.

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Man wrongly jailed for Birmingham pub bombing warns of the 'terrible trauma of normal life'

MARC ASPLAND

Now released men face the ordeal of freedom

By CAROL MIDDLETON
AND STEPHEN FARRELL

THE Bridgewater Three may feel jubilation now but the problems of freedom are only just beginning, members of the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four said yesterday.

Paddy Hill, 53, who served 17 years in prison after being wrongly convicted for the IRA Birmingham pub bombings, said not a week went by when he did not crave to be back behind bars.

The Irishman, who attended the Court of Appeal to support Vincent and Michael Hickey and Jim Robinson, said prisoners were not properly prepared to re-enter "normal life" and suffered "terrible trauma" on the outside. They often longed for the relative security of institutions where they did not have to make decisions for themselves.

"You feel you don't belong. You are a fish out of water," said Mr Hill. "These lads will find that one minute they are on cloud nine and the next



Paddy Hill, one of the Birmingham Six, yesterday

they are sitting on the floor crying like babies — and they won't know why the hell they are doing it."

"You are just a shell. You try to get a job and people ask you whether you have been trained on IBM computers. I have to say I don't even know how to work a bloody television set. There is not a week goes by when I don't wish I was back in prison. You get no help, no counselling, nothing."

Gerard Conlon, who served

14 years after being wrongly convicted for two 1974 pub bombings in which seven people died, said released prisoners felt like orphans.

"The people that Vincent, Michael and James are coming out to have no idea of the allowances they will have to make. There is no basic love or compassion shown in prison," he said.

Among the 200 people in court were Sara Thornton, convicted of murdering her

violent husband Malcolm but later freed after a retrial found her guilty of manslaughter. Jill Morrell, who campaigned for the release of the hostage John McCarthy, and George Silcott, brother of Winston Silcott, were also there. Showbusiness supporters included the actress Frances de la Tour and Roger Lloyd Pack, star of *Only Fools and Horses*. Michael Hickey's stepfather, a long-time campaigner for the release of the three, was himself behind bars yesterday as they walked free.

Frederick Whelan, 65, was jailed last month for a year by Leicester Crown Court for attempting to smuggle £140 worth of cannabis resin into Gartree Prison, after his stepson had asked for a "smoke" to relieve his boredom. He had no previous convictions.

Michael Hickey called yesterday for his stepfather to be released. "I smoke cannabis. I learnt it in prison. I needed some drugs to stay alive and my stepfather was trying to help me," he said.



Michael Hickey kisses the ground as he leaves the Law Courts after spending more than 18 years in jail

Boy's family may never be freed from pain of grief

By RICHARD DUCE

THE parents of Carl Bridgewater deal daily with an "open wound" of grief which after 19 years has not been allowed to heal, a local churchman said yesterday.

Brian and Jane Bridgewater made no comment about events in the Court of Appeal.

But Canon Paul Tongue spoke for them in the small West Midlands town of Wordsley, when he said: "There is total bewilderment and perplexity at the speed

of events which have happened in the last 24 hours."

There is a wound that grief leaves, particularly when a child dies, let alone when he is murdered. That wound has got to be given time and peace in which to heal, and the Bridgewaters have not had that," Canon Tongue, the Rural Dean of Stourbridge, said. "This may be the end for the Hickeys and Mr Robinson, but it is not for the Bridgewaters."

In a rare interview last year,

Mr Bridgewater said: "Just occasionally you can't help but wonder what the boy would be doing now. You can never get over something like this and you can't describe what it does to you. We were

convinced at the time that

those men did it. Nothing

since has changed our minds."

Canon Tongue said yesterday: "There will be disagreement about the guilt or innocence of these three men but the one thing about which there will be no argument is the terrible situation that still remains for the parents of Carl Bridgewater. The sad reality is their wound could be left open for the rest of their lives if there is no positive resolution."

Mr Bridgewater, an engineer, and his wife still live in the neat terraced house from

which Carl set out on his newspaper round in 1978. Their other children, Philip and Jane, have moved away.

The family home is a mile from Yew Tree Farm where Carl was killed. The farm is derelict after being bought by a

council to make way for a

relief road.

Mr and Mrs Bridgewater

left their home in the early

hours yesterday to stay with

friends. Joe Goodaker, a

neighbour, whose son Ian

used to play with Carl said:

"It is always displayed in

banner headlines as 'the

Bridgewater case', which

brings it back for them each

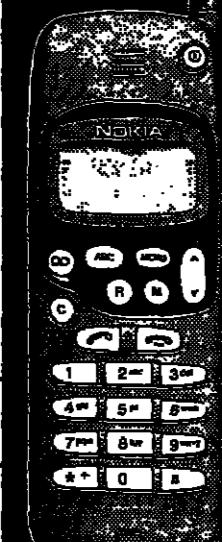
time. If the police tell you who

killed your child then you've

got to believe them."

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Former policeman who interviewed Pat Molloy is now a director in a Midlands security firm

Ex-detective stays silent over forgery accusation

BY RICHARD DUCE AND RUSSELL JENKINS

THE surviving detective constable accused of faking Vincent Hickey's confession contributed to his early death.

Mr Perkins had a hand in a significant proportion of the cases conducted by the West Midlands serious crimes squad that West Yorkshire Police were called in to review, and was once fined for falsifying evidence. The squad was disbanded after allegations that officers fabricated confessions and planted evidence in 23 cases during the 1980s. Members of the squad had also been involved in the convictions of the six men falsely imprisoned for 17 years for the Birmingham pub bombings.

Since the interview with Pat Molloy almost 19 years ago, Mr Leeke has become a director in the security guard firm, and now lives in a £200,000 executive home in Perton, overlooking countryside near Wolverhampton.

His partner in the West Midlands force, DC John Perkins, died from cancer in 1993, aged 46, a discredited and disgraced man. His wife June always complained that pressure brought to bear by the

Bridgewater campaigners contributed to his early death.

In the Court of Appeal, Michael Mansfield, QC, speaking for the defendants, said that a forged confession purporting to have been signed by Vincent Hickey was almost certainly written by Mr Leeke, and that Mr Perkins forged the signature.

Mr Molloy, who died in prison in 1981, always maintained that he had been shown just such a confession by police, but was not believed. Neither Mr Perkins nor Mr Leeke had anything to do with interviewing Hickey, who was being dealt with separately at another police station.

Last year, Mr Leeke said: "If

the judges [in the appeal] ask me, I certainly have things to say and, believe me, I will tell them about what some of us think."

Last night he arrived back at his home with his wife Anne, and again refused to comment on the court proceedings.

and that they would receive the full support and co-operation of the force.

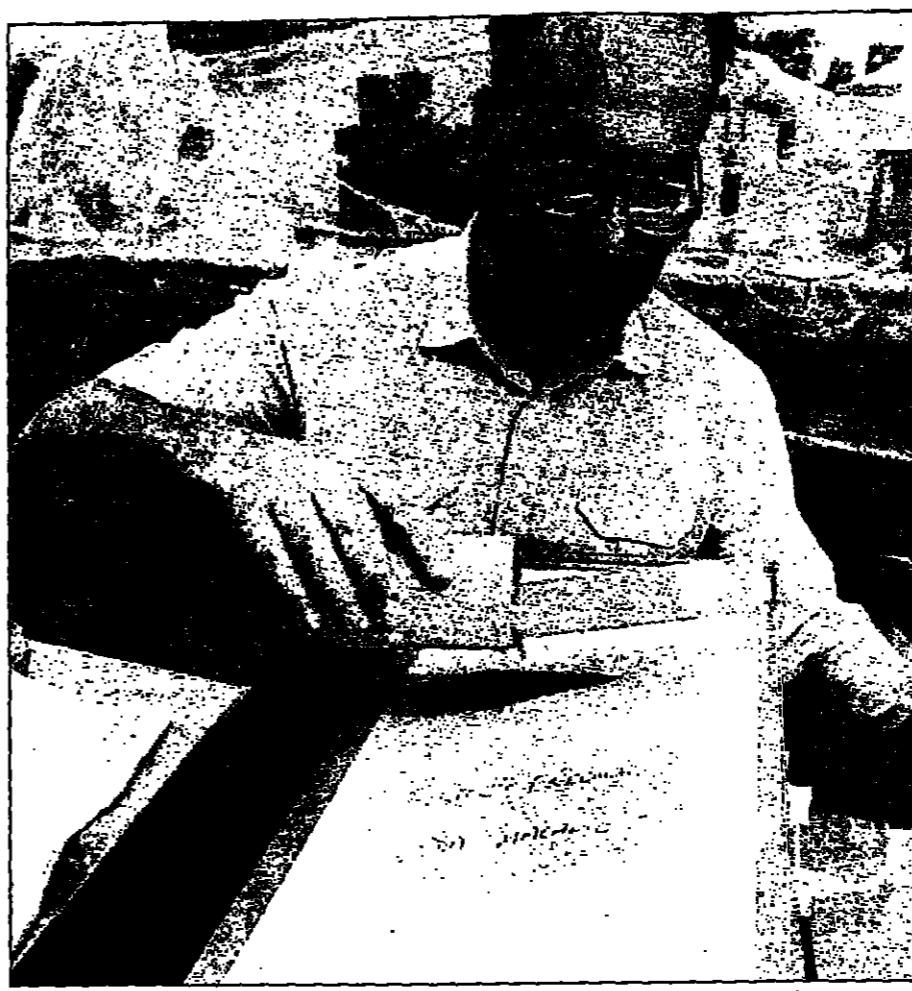
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A manufacturer's representative demonstrating the Esda machine in action

Evidence

Continued from page 1
imprint was discovered only two weeks ago when Jim Nichol, the convicted men's solicitor, was reviewing the evidence while preparing for the appeal due to start in April. And when Mr Nichol had the handwriting on the Hickey "statement" examined, his suspicions appeared to have been borne out.

Molloy's interview was carried out by Detective Constable Graham Leeke and Detective Constable John Perkins with Detective Sergeant John Robbins sitting outside.

The impressions in the body of the caption are in handwriting that certainly looks very similar to DC Leeke and the impressions in the signature of Vincent Hickey — which is certainly not a genuine Vincent Hickey signature — are very like the handwriting of DC Perkins", Mr Roberts told the court yesterday.

The Crown accepted that there was "no other sensible explanation that we can properly put forward" other than that the Hickey confession was a forgery.

Constable Perkins, who has since died, was disgraced in 1989 after he was caught falsifying a statement.

Lawyer who never doubted the four were innocent

BY RICHARD FORD

FOR Jim Nichol, the former pit worker, printer and now solicitor to the Bridgewater Three, yesterday's decision is a vindication of 14 years of largely unpaid work.

He is one of a handful of solicitors whose belief in their clients' innocence has made them dogged campaigners for justice. He also helped to clear Eddie Browning of the murder of Marie Wilkes, and Colin Wallace, the former army information officer, of manslaughter. He has been pursuing the Bridgewater case since 1983, when he was first put in touch with Ann Whelan, mother of Michael Hickey, by the journalist Paul Foot. Mr



Nichol studied law at night school

Nichol, 51, said: "I looked at the case and just believed they were innocent. That is why I do it."

He has worked unpaid on the case, overcoming setbacks such as the announcement by the then Home Secretary, Kenneth Clarke, in 1993 that he would not refer the case to the Court of Appeal.

Mr Nichol was destined to follow his father at North Wallbottle colliery on the edge of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. His parents died when he was a boy and he was brought up by an aunt and uncle in Lemington near Newcastle and left school at 15. Having contracted tuberculosis, he could not go underground, as his father had done, and worked above ground at the pit.

He became a printer and became a solicitor only at the age of 36, after studying law at night school. He would still like to go to university.

At his practice in Finsbury Park, north London, his partner is Carolyn Taylor, niece of the former Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor of Gosforth. Ms Taylor said: "Jim is driven. He takes the work home."

Mr Nichol, whose daughter was in court to witness yesterday's triumph, said that "gut instinct" had made him look again at the confession that had proved conclusive to undermining the Crown's case.

THE TIMES DILLONS CRIME FORUM

Learn the art of **CRIME WRITING**

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and Colin Dexter

TWO of Britain's leading crime novelists, Minette Walters (above) and Colin Dexter, will discuss the art of crime writing at a Times/Dillons Forum on Tuesday, March 4, at the Institute of Education, London WC1. The audience will also have a chance to question the authors.

Dexter's books are worldwide bestsellers and his Inspector Morse television series topped the ratings with 18 million viewers. Minette Walters' too had television success with *The Sculptress*, which will be followed in

May by *The Ice House*.

The admission price includes £2 off the price of Walters's new novel *The Echo* (£16.99) and £1 off Dexter's *Death is Now My Neighbour* (£9.99), both published by Macmillan. For full details of how to book, see coupon (below).

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Cleveland's shock tactics to curb youth crime may be adopted by other police forces

Glimpse of prison hell cuts teenage reoffending by half

By PAUL WILKINSON

THE reality of prison life is being brought home to young offenders on Teesside. They are shown the slopping-out buckets, the stained prison-issue underwear and the metal food trays on which custard flows into gravy as the inmate carries his meal back to his cell, perhaps up three flights of stairs.

Sexual abuse and constant obscenity are also discussed as is the prevalence of bullying and assault.

The Cleveland police project that uses shock tactics to stop young people reoffending is being studied by the Home Office and other forces. Graphic descriptions of the dehumanising and degrading experience of doing time has cut the level of repeat offending by teenagers in Stockton by more than half.

Just as the 17th-century astronomer Galileo recanted and withdrew his beliefs that the Earth was not the centre of the Universe when shown the torture instruments of the Inquisition, the teenagers are taking the warnings about prison to heart.

Inspector David Walker,

Stockton's community liaison officer, said: "At the end of one session one boy's mother was nearly sick at what she had been shown. Another woman was sobbing and her son was comforting her in his arms. He promised her he would never do anything to get himself locked away. It has been a tremendous success."

The Stockton scheme relies on two prison officers, Andy Mitchell and Bob Puckie, from the nearby Holme House jail, giving their time voluntarily. The Prison Service is considering a request from the Inspector of Constabulary to dedicate staff full-time to run similar projects elsewhere.

The scheme — "Prison, Me? No Way" — was tested for three months last year and has now been adopted as permanent policy by Cleveland police. During the trial period 31 young offenders attended Sunday morning sessions at Stockton police station. Of those attending only five have reoffended, against the normal reoffending rate of 37 per cent.

The scheme is aimed at 12 to 17-year-olds who have already received one caution for an offence. Those caught a second time are given the option of facing the courts or attending the "warts-and-all" course.

They and their families watch a 45-minute video shot inside Hull prison that follows an offender as he enters the system. It begins with him being stripped and examined and given regulation prison clothes. The daily routine inside is then shown with a full stereo system amplifying the sounds of incarceration.

Afterwards the two prison officers talk frankly about prison life, including graphic details of the drugs, the gangs and even the sexual assaults.

Mr Walker said: "The officers tell them not to believe anything their mates have told them about it being a cushy life. In Holme House there are two pool tables for 750 people. Only the bullies get to play on those. The TV goes on from 5.30 to 7.30 and only the bullies get to watch it."

Inspector Ian Birch, the head of Stockton district, said: "Any youngsters tempted to re-offend are soon put off when they have seen the video



Hard-hitting: Prison Officer Andy Mitchell underlines the realities of prison to young first offenders in Stockton

and have got a taste of life behind bars. Another bonus is that other members of the family of young offenders, including brothers, sisters and friends, also attend the scheme on a voluntary basis. It means peer pressure to commit crime may be reduced as more

people than anticipated know the consequences of committing crime.

"Youngsters are told straight away that after a second caution they have no more chances and that they will be dealt with by the courts. But we find we are

watching TV all day long but that's not the case. Youngsters are shown the indignity of life in prison and what it is like to eat and sleep in a cell where you also have a toilet. Offenders are shocked by what they see and results show the project is working."

Eurotunnel in freight safety talks

Eurotunnel has begun talks with safety officials about restarting freight shuttle services. But the company refused to comment on a French press report that it had decided against safer but more expensive shuttle wagons. The safety of the open wagons was questioned after drivers were hurt in a fire on a freight shuttle last November. Eurotunnel said that it had submitted only draft proposals to the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority.

Fan assaulted

James "Five Belles" Gardner, a friend of the Glasgow Rangers player Paul Gascoigne, was fined £500 at Paisley Sheriff Court for assaulting a Celtic fan in a pub. The Rangers player Charlie Miller and Steven McDermott were cleared of charges arising from the incident.

Freedom plea

Alexander Hall, 42, a former Strathclyde policeman jailed for life in 1988 for slitting the throat of a teenage girl, will ask for temporary freedom next month pending appeal. Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary, has agreed to have the case re-examined in the light of new evidence.

Yoghurt recall

Safeway has recalled 150g pots of its own-brand coffee and hazelnut yoghurts because the contents may have been mistakenly switched. Tesco is also recalling jars of its Chocolate Swirl and 325g and 200g jars of Chocolate Spread because they may contain traces of nut.

Blackmail case

A man who threatened to cut the throat of a Trafalgar Square ice cream vendor unless he paid £7,000 protection money was jailed for 33 months. Bob Darke, 37, of Kennington, south London, pleaded guilty to blackmail. His partner was earlier jailed for four years.

Baby snatcher

Sarah Allen, 24, of Maybush, Southampton, admitted four charges of trying to abduct babies and asked for nine other cases to be considered at Winchester Crown Court. She was placed on probation providing she undergoes psychiatric treatment.

Road 'shooting'

A "stressed" driver who fired an imitation gun at another motorist was jailed for four months. Paul Marcham, 27, of Whitley Wood, Reading, fired a blank from his car as the other man ran up to him after problems in overtaking.

Catholic pupils ran drugs ring

By DAVID CHARTER, EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

PARENTS at a Roman Catholic independent school were advised yesterday to "keep their wits about them" after the headmaster broke up a drugs ring involving 20 pupils.

Two fifth-form boys were expelled and 18 suspended over their involvement in supplying and using cannabis at St Bede's College in Manchester. The school joins a long list of leading schools that have disciplined students for drug-taking in the past year. They include Eton and Wellington College in Berkshire, and the King's School at Rochester, Kent.

Drugs have become so commonplace in schools that the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference of leading independent schools has suggested that pupils caught using cannabis should be given a second chance. Exeter University researchers said last year that a survey of 50,000 teenagers found that a third of boys and more than a quarter of girls aged 15 and 16 claimed to have tried cannabis. John

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THE TIMES SATURDAY FEBRUARY 22 1997

New hand finds Blue Peter still on course after 39 years

By JOE JOSEPH

IF THE names Christopher Trace, Valerie Singleton, John Noakes and Peter Purves mean anything to you, then you probably won't care much that Richard Bacon, a former local radio reporter, was yesterday named the 24th presenter of *Blue Peter*.

Bacon replaces the resident hunk, Tim Vincent, on what remains the BBC's flagship children's programme after nearly 40 years, when most people might have assumed that there just wasn't any crepe paper left to glue, any tall building that hadn't been abseiled, or any animal that hadn't been allowed to poop on the studio floor.

Christopher Trace and Lella Williams were the first presenters in 1958. Although the flesh in front of the camera has changed over the years, the spirit of *Blue Peter* — a programme which has given "sticky-back plastic" and "Get down Shep!" an almost Proustian undertow for generations of children — has stayed the same.

Bacon's audition involved making a Christmas card, bouncing on a trampoline and handling a snake — tricks



Model presenters: Christopher Trace, Valerie Singleton and, right, John Noakes in 1966

you would be asked to perform at a job interview only for *Blue Peter* or for one of the more progressive merchant banks.

Bacon, 21, has already been given his first television assignment: a trip to the jungle of Brunei for military training. Climbing remote mountains and building "Thunderbirds" Tracy Island out of old toilet rolls and egg boxes is apparently what Bacon had been aching to do all his short life, with pretty much the same passion that Tony Blair

had been aching to be Prime Minister.

"I remember seeing Carol Keating filming *Blue Peter* when I was with my family," Bacon said. "I was about ten, but I had dreams that it would be me one day. I couldn't believe it when I heard I had got the job. I've had to keep it a secret for over a week. When I rang my mum she jumped up and down screaming with excitement."

Oliver Macfarlane, the editor of *Blue Peter*, said: "We looked far and wide for our

new presenter. Richard is hugely likeable and that immediately came across in the audition. He's a good presenter and should be able to cope with most things that *Blue Peter* throws at him."

Bacon, born in Mansfield, began his career as a reporter at BBC Radio Nottingham before moving to the cable channel Live TV. At *Blue Peter* he will join on the sofa Stuart Miles, Katy Hill and Romana D'Annunzio — names currently recognisable only to those still in short trousers or Spice Girls T-shirts, but probably not for long.

Although the show's early presenters hung around pasting crepe paper onto empty washing-up liquid bottles for long enough to make their woolly jumpers look lived-in, the current crop often stays only as long as it takes to get a sexier offer from elsewhere.

Most famously, Anthea Turner went onwards and upwards — if not always happily, as her high profile and even higher salary attracted a certain amount of ridicule, not least from some of her subsequent co-presenters, such as Eamonn Holmes. Actor-cum-presenter Tim Vincent, whom Bacon is replacing



Richard Bacon meeting his new colleagues, from left: Romana D'Annunzio, Stuart Miles and Katy Hill

ing, has appeared in *The Clothes Show* and the drama series *Dangerfield*. He has also been a model. *Blue Peter* has lived on long after most of the competition.

had an amiable maniac who was willing to undertake any assignment — however hazardous or barmy — as long as he could be accompanied by a camera and his dog, Shep.

Top 40 is being manipulated, says Radio 1

By DAMIAN WHITWORTH

RECORD companies are giving away so many free and discounted singles to boost their success in the Top 40 that even the BBC says the chart has lost its credibility.

An exposé of the practice is to be broadcast on Radio 1 tomorrow night, after the chart programme. The Top 40 is compiled from figures for the number of records sold each week while other charts are based on the amount of airtime each single receives. Investigators for the programme *Hyping the Hits*, found that shops were being given free records so that they could sell them at discounts and push them into the number one slot. The records were then sold at normal price.

A number-one hit guarantees publicity for a group that will assist in much more lucrative album sales.

Shops were asked how it was possible to sell CD singles for just 99p when the normal price was around £3. It emerged that record companies were offering them up to three free singles for every one the shop bought and two shops were even given completely free stock.

In November last year Mark Owen, the former Take That singer, saw his single

Child shot straight to number 2. One shop was offered one free record for every one it bought. But when these failed to sell, the whole stock was given free.

John Preston, of the British Phonographic Institute and BMG Records (UK), to which Owen is signed, said: "Some of those records may have been given away but not in the kind of quantities that our competitors have." He said that 300,000 to 400,000 copies of that record had been sold. "I don't expect our discounts were more than about 15 or 20 per cent but I honestly don't know. That kind of discount is considered normal. A game of chicken is going on. Are we first to decide we are not doing what our competitors are doing?"

Last night Trevor Dann, head of BBC Music Entertainment, said: "The only way you can tell how popular a record is is how slowly it goes down the chart," he said.

He said listeners had a right to know what was happening. "The public may not be aware of how the chart is manipulated. We have an obligation to let them know."

The BBC is reviewing, with the record industry, the way the chart is compiled.

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Chief Rabbi places morality firmly on the political agenda

BY RUTH GLEDHILL AND DANIEL JOHNSON



THE Chief Rabbi, Dr Jonathan Sacks, today calls on the political parties to restore the Judaeo-Christian tradition to the centre of British national life. With his book, *The Politics of Hope*, Dr Sacks attempts to place morality on the agenda of political debate and advocates a liberal society rooted in communal and family values.

Dr Sacks argues that the views he holds are also being adopted "by politicians at both ends of the political spectrum - by Democrats

and Republicans in America, and members of the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties in Britain" - but his scathing attack on contemporary Britain will be particularly welcome to the Labour leader, Tony Blair. He shares the Chief Rabbi's interest in the American communist movement and his rejection both of "the politics of collectivism and the politics of private initiative".

His critique of Thatcherism and the right-wing libertarianism of

1980 is in marked contrast to the philosophy of his predecessor, Lord Jakobovits, who was close to Margaret Thatcher and espoused many of her political views. But Dr Sacks is also scathing in his treatment of the permissive society of the 1960s and the libertarians of the left.

The timing, so near to an election, of the first purely political work by a Chief Rabbi, and the first by the head of any British religious denomination for more than 50 years, will be seen as provocative by Dr Sacks's critics among orthodox Jews.

In his book, serialised in *The*

Times from today, Dr Sacks mounts a critique of Margaret Thatcher's oft-quoted statement: "There is no such thing as society." Dr Sacks comments: "This is a tenable view and there is only one thing to be said against it: it has been tried and it has failed."

He adds: "It has given rise to a social order - or more precisely, to a social disorder - more bleak than any within living memory. Today many parts of Britain and America are marked by vandalism, violent crime and a loss of civility; by the breakdown of the family and the ages. "Social geography is gradual-

widespread neglect of children; by an erosion of trust and a general loss of faith in the power of governments to cure some of our most deep-seated problems."

Dr Sacks says higher-income groups benefited disproportionately from the tax-cutting programmes of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s, but argues that the real inequality of post-industrial capitalism goes far deeper. He says the "new rich" no longer mix with the poor as, for example, lords mixed with serfs in earlier

ly polarising between the urban ghetto and the gilded ghetto," he argues.

Dr Sacks says he is not arguing for a return to Victorian values. "There is nothing to be said for marching boldly towards the past," he says. "What the Victorians taught us is that whatever we seek collectively to create, the way to do so is to focus on character and on the institutions that promote a strong sense of personhood and social concern."

Dr Jonathan Sacks, page 22
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Archbishop of York opposes US-style tele-evangelism

BY RUTH GLEDHILL, RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

THE Archbishop of York, Dr David Hope, said yesterday he would strongly oppose the establishment of fundamentalist American-style tele-evangelism radio and television stations in Britain.

Dr Hope had helped to promote the London Christian Radio Station, but said that it was "ecumenically broad-based", different in tone and content from those he was criticising. He particularly criticised Mother Angelica, the Roman Catholic broadcaster who has a huge following for her radio station in America with her denunciations of the world and the flesh. He did not want to see such tele-evangelist stations in this

country and argued that the Church should rather seek to convey its message through the mainstream media.

Typical of the kind of American tele-evangelist who would be opposed by the Archbishop was Jim Bakker, who, with his wife, found wealth and fame in the 1980s with their upbeat message. In his autobiography, Mr Bakker charts his downfall after the press learnt of his adultery. Jimmy Swaggart, another American tele-evangelist, resigned after admitting that he had slept with a prostitute.

Radio and television could help to pose the right questions, he said, arguing for the preservation of straightforward

"religious" programmes such as BBC Radio 3's *Choral Evensong* and BBC1's *Songs of Praise*. "These are still remarkably valid, and faith-creating and faith-provoking. They still command considerable audience figures."

There was a "spiritual hunger" that the Church had to learn to address through the media. "Everywhere I go I hear a similar story: 'that people want to believe in God, in Heaven; in something other than the rather shallow and predictable existence which can so easily become the norm, and that more than 70 per cent of the population say they believe in God.'"

This presented a challenge

for the Church, operating as it did in a culture where the answers to life's questions had to be presented in a few sentences. Dr Hope, addressing journalists, clergy and students at Newcastle University, said it was essential that bishops and other church leaders "seize the agenda".

"I acknowledge the need for us within the Church of England to be media-aware - less naive, more ready to understand the complexities of a media-saturated world." The mobile phone-carrying Archbishop has two of the most astute religious public relations officials in the Church of

England - Raymond Barker and the Rev Rob Marshall. Dr Hope admitted that he was not a regular listener to BBC Radio 4's *Thought for the Day* or *Prayer for the Day*, but said that his local radio station in York had a three-hour Sunday morning programme which was "stimulating, var-

ied and lively". The numbers listening to religious programmes on a Sunday, such as the one in York and BBC Radio 4's *Sunday* were remarkable, he said.

Dr Hope said: "There are those who conclude the whole [media] show to be so corrupting that the Christian and the

faith community should shun them entirely. Indeed, I know those whose basic policy is to say nothing: 'not available', 'no comment'. This, in my view, is unrealistic."

At Your Service, Weekend, page 15



The American tele-evangelists Jim Bakker, with his wife Tammy, and Jimmy Swaggart, with his wife Frances. Both men faced scandal

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THE TIMES SATURDAY FEBRUARY 22 1997

HOME NEWS 11

Artist returns to oils to capture light and colour

Traditional skills flower at Hockney's new show

BY DALYA ALBERGE
ARTS CORRESPONDENT

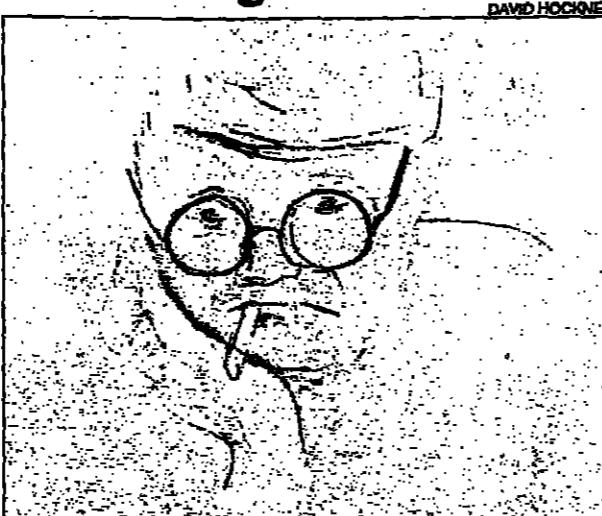
THE spectacular latest paintings by David Hockney, Britain's most celebrated living artist, will go on sale in May in his largest commercial show in London. Shown here in a special preview, the images of irises, sunflowers and violets, drenched in a radiant Californian light, use mesmerising colours that stay with the viewer long after they are seen.

In the new paintings, Hockney has forsaken faxes, photocopies and other technology that has inspired experimentation, to return to the original tools of his trade: oils and canvas.

Hockney, who lives in California, spoke yesterday of the influence of a revelatory exhibition last year on Vermeer, the 17th-century Dutch master of light. "What struck me was how vivid and strong the colour was in paintings which are 300 years old. It was partly the way he'd painted them," he said.

"I came back here and realised we've got a marvellous abundance of wonderful, strong light. I began to arrange daylighting in different ways. The most important thing was the way colour was put on so as to stay there."

"I put on thin layers, so that it is transparent. Vermeer's technique was thin layers — thin layers of ultramarine, for



Hockney by Hockney: a charcoal sketch from 1963 shows the way he constantly explores new styles

example, to make it blue. It's because of the colour that it's lasted 300 years. I've painted flowers throughout my career, but I've never really done a whole series."

Such is Hockney's draw for collectors, he commands prices fetched by Old Masters. The latest pictures, to be exhibited at Anely Juda Fine Art in central London from May 1, range in price from £15,000 to £40,000.

David Juda, co-director of the gallery where the works will be shown, said: "These are the best paintings he's done in the past 15 years. They're so immediate. It's the

colour. If you look at the painting, they look so incredibly thickly painted. But come up close and you can nearly see the canvas through the paint."

Hockney, born in 1932, began the series with sunflowers when his close friend, Jonathan Silver, a businessman and collector from Hockney's home-town of Bradford, sent him 59 sunflowers for his 59th birthday. "I painted 30 of them. You don't get too long to paint them. They only lasted six days. That's what I took to paint them. After then they bend and fall. I wanted to

paint pictures with a lot of yellow — the colour of hope, according to Van Gogh, and a rare colour in painting at the moment."

Hockney, who has criticised art schools that do not teach the basic crafts of painting and drawing, learnt the rules at Bradford College of Art and the Royal School of Art before breaking them.

He is best known for such images as *A Bigger Splash* (1967), the brilliant blue swimming pool painting depicting a splash just made by an unseen, submerged diver, his 1969 portrait of the fashion designer Ossie Clark in *Mr and Mrs Clark and Percy* — both owned by the Tate Gallery — and the suite of charming etchings *Six Fairy Tales From the Brothers Grimm*, also from 1969.

Hockney's show, which opens on May 1, will include a series of portraits among the 48 paintings. He remains faithful to his sitters and they will reappear in the latest images; his 96-year-old mother is among them.

The artist will fly to London to direct the hanging; an exhibition's installation is of paramount importance to him. Inspired by his work in stage design, he has constructed a complete scale model of the Anely Juda gallery at his Los Angeles studio and had every picture reduced to postage-stamp size.



Hockney's latest oil on canvas works can command Old Master prices

Robber is jailed for snatching Rolex

A ROBBER who wrested Rolex watches from a couple whose Range Rover was held up in traffic was jailed for ten years yesterday. Judge Elfer QC, said that Tarek Alayli carried out a "ruthless and terrifying" attack on victims whose only crime "was that by working hard at their chosen professions, they carried their riches of Rolex on their left wrists".

Alayli, 21, of Fulham, southwest London, admitted at Southwark Crown Court robbing Victor Monsey, 53, a company director, of his £16,000 Rolex and trying to rob his wife Elizabeth, 36, a cable television executive, of her £12,000 watch.

The couple, from Barnes, southwest London, fell prey last August to a gang armed with knives who had spent an afternoon driving around in a stolen car "seeking to prey on any victim who appeared to have valuable items".

Mr Monsey, who a few months earlier had a severe heart attack, and his wife were injured. Philip Shorrock, for the prosecution, said the robbery ended when a passer-by intervened with a golfing umbrella. The judge awarded a £600 "thank-you" to three South African tourists who chased Alayli.

At the time of the incident Alayli was awaiting trial for robbing a woman at her home. He was sentenced yesterday to six years for that offence and four years consecutively for the Monsey crimes.

Women hope to ring changes at St Paul's

BY RUTH GLEDHILL, RELIGION CORRESPONDENT



PRESSURE is mounting for St Paul's to admit women to its bellringing guild following the appointment of the cathedral's first woman priest, the Rev Lucy Winkett.

Women can take the ropes as guest ringers at St Paul's, but it is the only one of England's 42 cathedrals to exclude women from its resident guild.

Leading the call for women bellringers is Paul Smith, a former president of the guild. He said yesterday that women in the bell tower were "treated as chattels" and that he had seen them "appallingly humiliated". Mr Smith resigned as a member of the guild in protest over other matters before Christmas.

Eminent women ringers have backed the call for change, which many consider to be overdue, especially in the light of Miss Winkett's appointment as a minor canon from September. St Paul's, whose 12 bells are among the most difficult to ring in the country and whose guild is respected nationally for its expertise, draws its ringers from the Ancient Society of College Youths, a strictly male body.

Baroness Cox, who rings at the 14th-century St Mary's at Monken Hadley, near Barnet, north London, said: "It seems to me that there is tension between long-established tra-

dition and there may be good reasons for keeping St Paul's a male-only preserve. But, in general, I think we need to encourage ringing."

Jim Phillips, secretary of the cathedral guild, said: "We have six or seven ladies on whom we call regularly. If a competent lady turns up when there is a full complement of guild members, one of the guild will sit down and allow her to ring."

One insider said: "This is not something that has just blown up. Paul Smith resigned before Christmas but at the time he did not mention women as a reason for his resignation. He was unhappy about other things. There are often lady visitors to the tower at St Paul's."

The cathedral has been a bastion of Anglo-Catholic traditionalism in the Church of England, but the appointment of Miss Winkett indicates that under the stewardship of the new Dean, Dr John Moses, changes could be afoot.

Some churchmen and women would like to see girls and women singing in the choir at St Paul's, although there are no plans at present to introduce them. However, senior church figures, while reluctant to be quoted, are also quietly hoping for change on many fronts at the Church's flagship cathedral.

ditions, and sometimes traditions can be precious, compared with an attempt to open up ringing in what has been a male preserve. Without undermining tradition, I think bellringing is a marvellous part of our English heritage and would like to see as many people as possible getting joy and satisfaction from it."

She said there was no reason why women could not ring as well as men. "Women have a lot to give and a lot to receive from what is a very precious part of our English heritage. I am not one to

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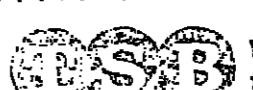
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Belgrade Mayor ends 50 years of socialist power

FROM TOM WALKER IN BELGRADE

Mr ZORAN DJINDJIC was yesterday elected the Mayor of Belgrade, ending fifty years of Socialist rule in the Serbian capital.

Preparations for a street party began in earnest after the vote, and hundreds of thousands were expected last night in the city centre to celebrate a milestone in the Zajedno coalition's crusade to rid Serbia of President Slobodan Milosevic's moribund regime.

They were lent heart by growing signs that Serbia's federal Yugoslav prime minister, Montenegro, is growing tired of Mr Milosevic's deadweight, which so strains its economy. Mire Djukanovic, the Montenegrin Prime Minister, said it would be "totally wrong" for him to stay in power, raising doubts as to whether Mr Milosevic can garner the Montenegrin support he will need to become the next Yugoslav federal President.

Yesterday's vote, a formality, was nonetheless a warning to Zajedno of the difficulties of keeping friends in the fractious battleground of Balkan politics. A withering and personal attack by Vojislav Seselj, the ultra-nationalist former Serb paramilitary leader, left Mr Djindjic red-faced and the session in procedural chaos.

"Once a thief always a thief," screamed Mr Seselj, dredging up an old allegation.

Berisha travels to raise support

Tirana President Berisha dismissed demands for his resignation over the crash of pyramid investment funds and headed to the north of the country in his campaign to win back public support. On Thursday protesters in the capital threw stones at police who fired live rounds over their heads. (Reuters)

unstinting support since November, when Mr Milosevic overthrew Zajedno's election victories. "I see the great will of the people," he said. "Finally Belgrade will become a world metropolis."

He recognised the most obvious problem for Zajedno council, the bankrupt town halls they have inherited, and the likelihood that Mr Milosevic will attempt to starve them of state cash — but pledged: "Belgrade must become a mirror of Serbia."

Although he acknowledged his Serb Radical Party could not affect yesterday's outcome, Mr Seselj gave warning of trouble, predicting the break-up of the Zajedno coalition.

"Djindjic will ruin you," he shouted at Vuk Draskovic, Mr Djindjic's Zajedno partner.

One of the first actions taken by the council yesterday was to order an audit of its Socialist predecessor's books. It also announced a new board of directors, comprising cross-party politicians and journalists, for Studio B, the capital's television station.

Another blow to the Milosevic family was Thursday's assassination of a business associate of the President's son, Marko. Vladien Kovacevic, who owned the "Tref" group of companies, was shot in New Belgrade's Sava business centre.



The four murdered young women, who were identified only by their first names, clockwise from top left. Audrey, 17, Isabelle, 20, Peggy, 20, and Amelie, 17



A woman and her daughter weeping at the site near Boulogne where the bodies were found yesterday

Bodies of Boulogne murder victims found

FROM REUTER IN LILLE

FRENCH police yesterday found the bodies of four young women who went missing during a carnival evening ten days ago in the northern port of Boulogne.

Investigators said suspects had confessed to the murder of the women, whose bodies were found concealed at the base of a concrete blockhouse built by German forces during the Second World War in a forest outside the village of Portel, near Boulogne.

The four young women, named only as 20-year-olds

Isabelle and Peggy, and 17-year-olds Audrey and Amelie — were wearing carnival dresses when they went missing. They were allegedly murdered on the evening following their disappearance, and their bodies were found at Sainte-Cecile-Plage.

Five members of one family were detained by police. The suspects included three brothers, all of them scrap merchants, who live in a village a few miles from the spot where the women were seen for the last time, police said.

Euro-tax 'fudge' helps Italy towards EMU

FROM CHARLES BREMNER
IN BRUSSELS

ITALY was given a helping hand in its uphill struggle to qualify for monetary union yesterday when the European Commission ruled that it was entitled to use a once-off "Euro-tax" to narrow its budget deficit.

Eurostat, the Commission's statistical arm, rejected critics' claims that Rome's special tax amounted to a "fudge" to help it scrape below the budget limit for 1997, set by the Maastricht treaty as a key condition for membership of the future single currency.

The decision was applauded by Professor Romano Prodi, the Italian

Prime Minister, who has staked his job on swapping the lira for the euro when the currency is launched on January 1, 1999. It was greeted with a stony silence in Bonn, where the Finance Ministry would make no comment.

Italy's burning ambition to join economic and monetary union (EMU) at the outset is upsetting German politicians who fear that the consequences of letting the traditionally weak currencies of southern Europe embrace the euro.

Theo Waigel, the German Finance Minister, has warned candidate members against "creative bookkeeping", a charge that has been indignantly denied by Signor Prodi. German warnings have come to sound less

authoritative this month with signs that Bonn, faced with crushing unemployment, will itself be hard-pressed to match the Maastricht criteria.

While Germany's new travails have prompted speculation on a possible delay in EMU, they have fed hopes in Italy, Spain and Portugal that European leaders could ease the rules for the sake of keeping to the timetable.

The future euro countries will be chosen by the 15 heads of government at a summit in Britain in little over a year's time.

They must also take into account national debt and performance in inflation and interest and exchange rates but the budget deficit is deemed to be the cardinal test.

Eurostat has approved a series of

other controversial budget manoeuvres, including a switch of state pension funds that is helping to narrow the French deficit this year.

Yesterday it said the Italian tax, to be levied this year, qualified as a legitimate fiscal revenue because it would not be repaid. It also gave the nod to other Italian measures involving railway investment.

In an emotional speech in Rome yesterday, Signor Prodi issued a sharp rebuke to Germany for its reluctance to accept Italian membership of EMU. "Europe is not just about a currency, it is impossible to think of Europe cut off from its great Latin culture," Signor Prodi said. "German culture cannot represent by itself all of Europe."

Mobutu returns to France

FROM BEN MACINTYRE
IN PARIS

Last month he came back to France for new medical tests and spent a further three weeks in his mansion overlooking the Mediterranean.

During his earlier convalescent periods in the south of France, Mr Mobutu held meetings with various African and French leaders as well as with United Nations officials, but presidential aides did not say whether he was planning any other official contacts during his current stay.

Mr Mobutu had an operation for prostate cancer in Switzerland last August. After recuperating in Switzerland and France as Zaire slipped closer to anarchy, he finally returned home in December.

France has welcomed the Zairean leader in the belief that he still has enough authority to bring order to the chaos in his country.

In Cape Town, Ngamba Ko Ayumba, the Zairean envoy, who is Mr Mobutu's nephew and security adviser, said that Thabo Mbeki, the South African Deputy President, was talking to both sides in the conflict. "South Africa is trying to bring points of view together and pass one side's point of view on to the other," he said in an interview broadcast here by French radio.

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Seven rivals 'pose risk to Jiang's hold on power'

FROM IAN BRODIE IN WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT Jiang Zemin of China has failed to consolidate his grip on power and faces at least seven rivals for influence within the Communist Party, according to a leaked CIA report yesterday.

His shaky control could keep Mr Jiang focused on domestic rather than global issues, the report said. An American government official familiar with the report said that although Mr Jiang had shown "remarkable staying power", the real test of his leadership skills, in the wake of Deng Xiaoping's death, would come at the 15th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in October.

Without Mr Deng, Mr Jiang faces the curse of Chinese succession. Although he was chosen by the late paramount leader, history is against him. Chairman Mao's handpicked heir, Hu Gufeng, lasted only two years. Even Mr Deng once admitted that for a leader to pick his successor was a "feudal practice".

The secret CIA report, prepared last June, portrayed Mr Jiang's rivals as trying to limit his power before the party congress, even though he is head of state, general secretary of the Communist Party and commander-in-chief. The assessment, by a CIA section

that tracks foreign leadership developments, was leaked to *The Washington Times*.

This right-wing newspaper is frequently used as a conduit by the intelligence agency for opinions that it wants to publicise without admitting its authorship. A CIA spokesman said she could not comment on the report.

Whatever the CIA's motives, the leak could be construed as a warning, before Mr Jiang's meeting with President Clinton this year, that China needs international support and should not provoke the United States over the touchy issues of human rights and the handing over of Hong Kong.

The report said that Mr Jiang was expected to pursue "less controversial activities" in an effort to build his own stature as well as China's. In fact, there has already been an appreciable warming of Sino-American relations since the CIA report was written and Mr Clinton was re-elected.

The report identified a key rival to Mr Jiang as Qiao Shi, chairman of the National People's Congress, who oversees national security, the police and courts. It said he was openly critical of Mr Jiang's policies towards Taiwan, had contradicted him in front of regional Chinese officials and could emerge as "kingmaker for another challenger".

Other rivals included Li Peng, the Prime Minister, "working to undercut Mr Jiang's authority behind the scenes"; Zhu Rongji, the Deputy Prime Minister who disagreed with Mr Jiang over economic policy; and Li Ruihuan, a politburo member linked with Mr Jiang's critics.

Further potential challengers were said to be Tian Juyun, a political ally of Mr Qiao; Yang Shangkun, 89, a former President who criticised some of Mr Jiang's decisions; and Wan Li, the former chairman of the National People's Congress who is said to be opposed to Mr Jiang over policy on Taiwan.

Jiang: Beijing congress "will be the test"

Deng's death mourned strictly to order

BY JAMES PRINGLE
IN BEIJING AND
OUR FOREIGN STAFF

AS CHINA entered its first full day of state mourning for Deng Xiaoping yesterday, thousands of official commemorative meetings were held throughout the country by local Communist Party committees, government offices and state-run organisations.

In Beijing's Tiananmen Square, police detained a man as he carried a wreath apparently dedicated to Mr Deng. He was bundled into a car along with the wreath, on which the words "Deng Xiaoping" were written on a ribbon, a witness said.

At Mr Deng's birthplace, thousands of wailing mourners fell to their knees. Armed police were summoned to keep order among the unruly in Paifang village in the remote southwestern province of Sichuan where pilgrims with tear-streaked faces prostrated themselves on the ground. "There are a lot of people crying, some of them young, but most of them are older," said an official at Mr Deng's former home, now a museum.

In Chengdu, Sichuan's provincial capital, with its 120 million population, up to 30,000 people gathered on Thursday night to mark the death of their native son, carrying wreaths in white mourning flowers which were placed in large piles. Hundreds of students marched through Chengdu's streets carrying tributes to the departed leader, who spoke with a thick Sichuan accent, and banners bearing the signatures of thousands of mourners.

Witnesses said police had to intervene several times to restore order. The Government dislikes such spontaneous displays that are outside its control.

As portrayed on state television here, there was nothing

of students marching through Chengdu's streets carrying tributes to the departed leader, who spoke with a thick Sichuan accent, and banners bearing the signatures of thousands of mourners.

Witnesses said police had to intervene several times to restore order. The Government dislikes such spontaneous displays that are outside its control.

As portrayed on state television here, there was nothing

spontaneous about any of the official meetings. Their object was to pay tribute to Mr Deng and his policies and to emphasise the need for China's 1.2 billion population to unite around the leadership of Mr Deng's chosen successor, Jiang Zemin, 70, the party chief, a lacklustre and possibly stopgap figure who is nevertheless constantly referred to as the "core" of the new leadership.

Diplomats see these meetings, which all take the same

form and are clearly minutely choreographed from Beijing as an effort to ensure that the party and state apparatus — and people at large — stay in line, and thus reduce the danger of trouble that any spontaneous, genuine mourning might produce.

"They are terrified of people's human feelings and fear that any outpouring of grief turns dangerous," one envoy said.

Under black banners reading "Comrade Deng will live

in our hearts forever", officials paid tribute to Mr Deng's "achievements" and affirmed their determination to carry out the transformation of China he set in motion, a transformation restricted to the economic sphere which did not permit any liberalisation in politics. No venues have been set aside for people to pay their last respects to Mr Deng. State media reported last night that this was in deference to his wish for a simple funeral, though it is believed it was to avoid possible trouble. In 1976, when Zhou Enlai, the revered Prime Minister, died, and in 1989, with the death of Hu Yaobang, the deposed party chief, hundreds of demonstrators in Tiananmen Square turned mourning for dead leaders into protests against living ones, and both times troops had to move in to clear the square with loss of life. Tributes, even floral ones, are anathema at Tiananmen.



Lee: Democrats will refuse to pay fines

Hong Kong leader threatens street protests

BY MICHAEL BRYSON
DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

THE leader of Hong Kong's Democrats, Martin Lee QC, threatened civil disobedience yesterday, including illegal street protests, if China insists on introducing draconian laws to curb Hong Kong's Bill of Rights when it takes over the territory.

"This must be one of the ways for Hong Kong people to express their views," he said. "If the police give us a permit, then we will do it. If they do not, we will do it anyway." His party would refuse to pay any fines they incurred. Mr Lee added that he did not

think he would be arrested because he was too well known abroad. He said, however, that he feared his party colleagues would be.

Speaking in London at the end of a tour of European capitals, Mr Lee said he would challenge the new laws in the courts. If they lost, as he was sure they would once a new law on subversion allowed the authorities to declare illegal anything they disliked, he would continue his opposition to any measures introduced to curb democracy in Hong Kong.

He said he would not emigrate before the handover to China in July. "I feel that the Hong Kong people need a

voice. My party is popular because it is the voice of Hong Kong." He said that the moment he left, he would become irrelevant.

The Democrats hold the largest number of seats in the colony's Legislative Council, but none has been selected for the provisional council appointed by Beijing.

Mr Lee welcomed the announcement by Tung Chee-hwa, the chief executive appointed by China to take over in July, that all civil servants would be asked to stay in their jobs. That was an important signal to the colony. "I am giving him the benefit of the doubt," he said. "If he only says

things to please the Chinese leaders but then quietly does things for Hong Kong, that is the best we can hope for. But there are certain things where you cannot please both sides."

He criticised Chris Patten, the Governor, for not setting up an independent human rights commission years ago. There was still time for Mr Patten to introduce important reforms, he added — in particular, setting up an independent body to administer legal aid, now controlled by a government department. "Do you think after the handover that anyone will be able to call for legal aid for constitutional challenges?"

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Key suspects in Clinton fund scandal invoke right to silence

FROM TOM RHODES AND BROWEN MADDOX IN WASHINGTON

TWO key suspects in President Clinton's fundraising scandal retreated to the shelter of the American Constitution yesterday, invoking the Fifth Amendment to remain silent.

John Huang, the former Commerce Department official at the centre of the investigations, and Webster Hubbell, the former associate Attorney-General, refused to submit subpoenaed documents to Congress and invoked their privilege against self-incrimination.

However, in a letter to the House government and oversight committee, Mr Huang's lawyer agreed to turn over some documents and signalled that his client, a top Democratic fundraiser before Mr Clinton's re-election last year, may be prepared to cooperate if granted immunity from prosecution.

Their refusal fuels the controversy surrounding Mr Clinton's fundraising practices, the target of multiple investigations which are becoming the scourge of his second term. The White House faces a protracted and embarrassing hearing even though the nemesis of Mr Clinton's first four years ap-

peared to be fading. Kenneth Starr, the independent Whitewater counsel, announced this week he would leave for an academic position in California in the summer.

He maintained his departure had no bearing on possible indictments against either the President or the First Lady, but the White House was secretly jubilant.

The joy was short-lived. Asian links to Mr Hubbell, a former Clinton golfing friend released from jail last week after serving 16-months for Whitewater fraud, have served to stir the embers of the failed Arkansas land deal.

Pleading "the Fifth" is a move that is not usually used to block the submission of financial records. And the unusual step may prove provocative to congressional investigators.

At one time Hillary Clinton's law partner, Mr Hubbell has been implicated in both the Whitewater and campaign finance investigations. He was ordered to produce documents to Congress about payments that he received from Clinton allies after he resigned from the Justice Department amid the growing Whitewater scandal in 1994. Mr Starr had also been investigating Mr Hubbell's receipt of \$325,000 (£200,000) in fees from various sources.

Two other central figures in the funding controversy, Charles Yah Lin Tse, a Taiwanese former Arkansas restaurateur, and Pauline Kanchanakul, a Thai businesswoman, have also instructed lawyers not to accept subpoenas from the Senate.

The White House said it "respected" the decisions made under advice of counsel but said Mr Clinton wanted "all the facts to come out as quickly as possible".



Starr: relief at his departure shortlived



The space shuttle *Discovery* makes a rare night-time landing at Florida's Kennedy Space Centre yesterday, ending a ten-day mission to complete a \$350 million (£21 million) overhaul of the Hubble Space Telescope. The astronauts made five spacewalks during the mission

Love letters reveal Fidel's dialectic of romance

FROM TUNKU VARADARAJAN
IN MADRID

SIX previously unknown love letters, written more than 40 years ago by Fidel Castro, were published here yesterday for the first time, revealing that big, bad, bearded dictators can occasionally be great "sofies" too.

The letters, obtained from the Cuban President's estranged daughter and published in the newspaper *ABC*, were written by Señor Castro to Natividad Revuelta, the wife of a Havana doctor with whom he had a passionate love affair.

Written in 1954 from a prison on Isla de Pinos, the letters are an intriguing blend of the tender and the didactic. In one, he pays this awkward compliment to his lover: "I keep all your letters with me and study them more closely than I would a treatise on

psychology." In another, he orders her not to send him a record player which she wanted to do — as such "luxury" in jail would "mortify" him.

Touchingly, he asks instead for a photograph of Señora Revuelta: "If you do not send me one I will be heartbroken. Why don't you send me more than one? You know I can't see you in person now."

There are some lines of great passion, composed in the stylised manner of a leader accustomed to giving speeches. "You are a woman. Women are the most delicate of all creatures in this world. My companion in happiness, in pleasure, in sentiment, in the past, present and future, in every minute and in a lifetime, you are in the most intimate recess of my heart, where I venerate you and hold you sacred."

In another letter, he writes: "One

kiss is very much like another, yet lovers never tire of kissing. There are phrases that are like kisses, like honey that never dries. This for me is the secret of your letters. They are all delightful, giving me a pleasure of which I never tire. And they are all varied, like the stars, which shine with a different light each night."

There is also, sometimes, a boyish flavour: "Do you really love me? Swear to me! Even more than I do you?" he writes.

Elsewhere, nervously, he says:

"Promise me that my letters don't bore you!" He chides his lover, though, for using a typewriter: "Haven't I told you to write by hand instead of on a machine? If that takes too much time, I won't mind if your letters are shorter. But I do love your delicate handwriting, so feminine, so unmistakable."

In another letter, he scolds her for

addressing him as *amigo* and not as Fidel. Inevitably, though, Señor Castro's politics intrude, often with a great clang. Sentences after writing of his love for Señora Revuelta, he rages against "injustice", demanding that the State "triple taxes on the rich... and all those who wallow in luxury".

In describing his daily routine, his reading habits are revealed as rather predictable: "I lie down in bed every night at 11, and read Karl Marx till I fall asleep."

In his penultimate missive from prison, he writes the following, almost as if it were a caricature of a love letter from a jailed revolutionary: "I believe that love also has its dialectic: thesis, antithesis and synthesis — just like a revolution, which would not exist without a counter-revolution."

Leading article, page 23

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THE TIMES

Exclusive screenings of *The Crucible*

Readers of *The Times* have the chance to enjoy an exclusive preview screening of *The Crucible*, starring Academy Award winner Daniel Day-Lewis, Winona Ryder and Joan Allen. Arthur Miller wrote the screenplay for the film which is directed by Nicholas Hytner (who also directed the award winning *The Madness of King George*). Four tokens and the voucher entitle you to TWO complimentary seats for a screening of *The Crucible* on Monday, February 24.

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Sweden's welfare ministers fight shy of rendezvous with monetary union

Eurosceptic women run the show in Amazonia

THERE is a British lager look view of Swedish women which traces a route from the bouncy actresses in *I Am Curious — Yellow*, through Britt Ekland to Ulrika Johnson, the Gladiator star.

The clichés centre on Nordic bloneness and a certain little athleticism. Well, there are still blondes in Sweden, but the news is that they now run the country and a good many of them are trying to steer the Government away from a rendezvous with European monetary union.

An oddity of the Swedish Cabinet is that exactly half its members are women and they occupy 11 far from marginal portfolios: foreign affairs, agriculture, employment, social welfare, health, justice, transport and environment among them. One woman, Mona Sahlin, 39, narrowly missed becoming Prime Minister last year — she used her government credit card to buy nappies and chocolate for her children, and another is deputy head of the trade union congress. The public services union is led by a woman. Amazonia has taken over in the north.

Since most of the Cabinet posts occupied by women re-

STOCKHOLM FILE

by ROGER BOYES

late directly to the welfare state, which is being pared back in the rush to meet the Maastricht criteria for EMU. It is not surprising that female ministers are among the most Eurosceptical.

Some owe their appointments directly to Goran Persson, the Prime Minister, and are reluctant to depart publicly from the official line of "wait and see" on the euro. A scattered few, such as the Agriculture Minister, are enthusiasts. But, in common with the women running the trade unions and ordinary Swedish female voters, many are quietly hostile. Only if a solid case can be made for the job-creating merits of the euro will the mood shift.

Ulrica Messing plays a pivotal role in this calculation. She is the Employment Minister and, at 29, the youngest member of the Cabinet. Her profile is typical for the new

breed of women politicians. She did not go to university and rose quickly through the ranks of the Social Democratic Party: she was elected to parliament at 23.

Mrs Messing is an unmarried mother and during the week her son, Pontus, five, is cared for by her partner, an unemployed chef. Opposition deputies sneer that she cannot be much of an Employment Minister if she is unable even to find a job for the man she lives with.

"Since there is not a great demand for full-time restaurant chefs, my partner is studying maths and computer sciences to improve his prospects," she explains.

He is, in short, one of the many thousands on training schemes who, added together with the registered unemployed, bring Sweden's jobless rate to 13 per cent.

The growing influence of women on the political system has forced the Government to overhaul its working methods. Margo Wallstrom, the Minister of Culture, 40, conducts most of her departmental business from home in Karlstad, 190 miles south of Stockholm. She drops off her nine-year-old at the local school, takes her 16-month-old toddler son to the day-care centre and then enters her

The assessment seems to be: women voters feel sympathy for women politicians with health problems, but are the most censorious if there is any hint of financial corruption.



Open government

NOT many British politicians, one suspects, could survive the Swedish system of government. Public scrutiny of credit card receipts toppled the Social Democratic crown princess Mona Sahlin. Under Swedish law anyone is allowed to read the Prime

Minister's incoming and outgoing mail. A few letters to statesmen and on matters of security are classified, but it is quite legal to visit the Prime Minister's mail room and flick through his communications with President Clinton or European leaders.



Mona Sahlin, who narrowly missed becoming Prime Minister after she was censured for using her government credit card to buy chocolate for her children

Danish leader quits over drink driving

FROM CHRISTOPHER FOLLETT
IN COPENHAGEN

HANS ENGELL, the Danish Conservative leader, resigned as party chairman yesterday after a car crash — he was found to have broken drink driving limits.

"I have made a serious mistake and must take the consequences. We stand ahead of a decisive political period with several elections ahead and there must be

no doubt about the party's prime ministerial candidate," he said in a statement.

Although his party commands less electoral support than the main opposition Liberals, he was seen as a potential candidate for Prime Minister if a centre-right government were returned to power.

In the accident, Mr Engell swerved off the Copenhagen-Elsinore motorway and hit a lampost, leaving his car a wreck and injuring himself superficially. No

body else was involved. Police breathalised him and found him to be well over the legal limit.

A former journalist, Mr Engell, 48, was a former justice minister. He is to remain leader of the parliamentary Conservative group. Political commentators point to Anne Birgitt Lundholdt, the party's political spokeswoman and a former energy and industry minister, as a likely successor.

Dead boar too 'hot' for French hunters

FROM BEN MACINTYRE
IN PARIS

THE ancient sport of wild boar hunting, enjoyed by danger-loving French kings and peasants for centuries, has become potentially even more perilous with the discovery that a beast killed recently in eastern France was highly radioactive.

A group of huntsmen in the forest of Saint-Jean d'Ormont in the Vosges region bagged six wild boar on December 8 last year, one of which was found, after testing, to have three times the highest accepted safe level of radioactivity.

The radioactive cloud from Chernobyl passed directly over the region in 1986, and every year since, the French Ministry of Agriculture has carried out extensive tests on milk, water, mushrooms and other local produce. Until this week, the ministry's tests had shown no abnormal rise in radioactivity, but the discovery of the radioactive wild boar has raised fresh fears that lingering contamination from the Ukrainian nuclear disaster may be worse than suspected.

Two experts from the French Office of Protection from Radioactivity were dispatched to the Vosges this week to carry out further tests on the suspect wild boar or *sanglier* meat to try to determine the cause of the contamination.

The discovery of the radioactive boar was fortuitous. "A hunter gave a piece of wild boar to a friend in the veterinary services, who carried out his own tests without telling us," Christian Demange, the Mayor of the nearby town of Saint-Dié, who was one of the hunters, said.

Experts at the Independent Centre for Research into Radioactivity in Paris said the levels of caesium-137 and caesium-134 found in the meat were "characteristic of the Chernobyl cloud".

The *sanglier* is the basis of some of France's most famed dishes, as well as wild boar pâté, but researchers insisted that boar hunters are still more likely to be gored than poisoned by the beasts.

At this level of contamination, a fully grown wild boar weighing 340 lb would have to be consumed before exceeding the recommended health limit, an achievement of which only the cartoon boar hunter Oberlix the Gaul would be capable.

"They ran very fast," Monsieur Demange said of last December's boar hunt. "Now I know why. They were nuclear powered."

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■ OPERA

Mobile phones and cameras find their way into English Touring Opera's production of *The Marriage of Figaro* (Hilary Finch writes).



■ CONCERT

Hidden surprises as Michael Tilson Thomas and the LSO celebrate Debussy at the Barbican

MICHAEL Tilson Thomas revealed on Thursday the first panel of his triptych of beautifully ordered programmes celebrating Debussy — *Painters of Dreams*, part of Radio 3's vast tribute to the music of our time, *Soundings of the Century* (Hilary Finch writes).

Nocturnes — for Tilson Thomas the starting point of modern music — and *La Mer* framed an evening of less frequently heard solo-orientated works. Yet, already within *Nocturnes* the solitary voices were there. Tilson Thomas's cueing of several of the London Symphony Orchestra's wind and brass principals for applause reflected his emphasis on the orchestra as a band of soloists in this music, teasing out the illusion of improvisation.

So, writing as display, though, was anathema to Debussy, and both his *Rhapsody for Clarinet* and the *Rhapsody for Saxophone and Orchestra* were wheedled out of him in

Canvas of note

■ CONCERT

LSO/Tilson Thomas
Barbican/Radio 3

spite of himself. The first was written as a competition piece for conservatoire students; and the second as a response to a persistent American lady who had been prescribed the saxophone as relief for respiratory problems.

Andrew Marriner's imaginative clarinet playing took his *Rhapsody* far beyond the virtuous testing grounds. And John Harle relished both the haunting calls and replies to his orchestral woodwind col-

leagues, as well as the Moorish arabesques cued in by the rattle of a tambourine. The saxophone, though, remained underexploited. Not so the human voice in the *Trois Ballades de François Villon*. The Swedish baritone Peter Matti's grasp of Debussy's recreation of the medieval archaism of these texts was total. He brightly animated each word of the opening lovesong, and the prayer to the Virgin found a new transubstantiation in his voice.

The real revelation of the evening, though, was the LSO's understated performance of *Berceuse Héroïque*: the contradiction within its title reflecting the unease with which Debussy fulfilled this commission for the war effort in 1914. Britten surely remembered its dark harp and cello sonorities and its tremulous string chords when he pondered the images of war in the aftermath of a conflict Debussy was never to see.

There is only one place in which a mobile phone is more annoying than in a railway carriage, and that is on the operatic stage. It is becoming every bit as common in one as in the other, and in the latter it seems to serve as a talisman to reassure everyone concerned — director, audience and sponsors — that here is a production which will be regularly accessible, comprehensible, communicative: a veritable one-to-one.

English Touring Opera have also fallen for the old trick. At the Cambridge Arts Theatre, Figaro and Susanna are summoned by one: Bartolo

THE TIMES ARTS

■ ON MONDAY

Melvyn Bragg in praise of one of the greatest institutions in the land: the lending library



■ ON MONDAY

How four of the most enterprising West End hits of recent years have found their way onto the TV screen

OPERA IN CAMBRIDGE AND LONDON

Techno crass

The Marriage of Figaro
Cambridge

addresses his first aria to one. Basilio, in case you were wondering, is a pimp who teaches aerobics (although they don't do a lot for his vocal muscle); the Count a high-class photographer (more Kookai than Snowdon); Susanna the new model/PA he has his eye and hands on.

Meanwhile, Figaro and Cherubino hang around, trying to fit rather awkwardly into the general plan of things, while the Countess watches a video of Stephen Medcalf's Glyndebourne *Figaro*.

Medcalf, by the way, directs this *Figaro* too. He has doctorated Amanda Holden's translation to accommodate words such as "froze", and "the description of Susanna" — and it is taken at its word.

And herein lies the pity. For

there is only one place in which a mobile phone is more annoying than in a railway carriage, and that is on the operatic stage. It is becoming every bit as common in one as in the other, and in the latter it seems to serve as a talisman to reassure everyone concerned — director, audience and sponsors — that here is a production which will be regularly accessible, comprehensible, communicative: a veritable one-to-one.

English Touring Opera have also fallen for the old trick. At the Cambridge Arts Theatre, Figaro and Susanna are summoned by one: Bartolo



Matthew Hargreaves and Anna-Clare Monk in *Figaro*

HILARY FINCH

Hidden talents

Trinity College of Music
Camden Centre, NW1

conductor, Dominic Wheeler, overwhelmed her too often, it was not altogether his fault.

Hollander's messy staging of the Stravinsky was jam-packed with "ideas". Jocasta had one — or was it two? — alter egos. Creon had outsize hands but, since he was in the balcony, half the audience couldn't see him. We were treated to a slide-show of river views. The Narrator, giving a fair impersonation of Virginia Bottomley, donned Jocasta's frock and went off with Oedipus in a false happy end. Video cameras supplied arty little freezes. Gosh.

In an ideal world, directors of students would ensure that their charges are both visible and audible, then start having "ideas". Two, however, showed great promise: the bass, Paul Puttnam as Tiresias (fruity sound, imposing presence) and Rebecca Smith (Jocasta), a spirited *soprano* in the making. The title role is a killer for a young singer, and Glenn Brainley coped with it honourably.

RODNEY MILNES

THE SUNDAY TIMES



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THE SUNDAY TIMES IS THE SUNDAY PAPERS

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The rich do not need new planning orders to help them build grand houses — but owners of older piles are struggling

The end was nigh. The medieval house was as down-at-heels as its ancestral owner. But Miss Matilda Talbot of Lacock Abbey could not resist her love of entertaining. Her "hops" in the great hall on winter evenings could not be refused without offence. She combed Wiltshire for young ladies, who came "exceptionally plain and utterly speechless". As James Lees-Milne recalls in his diary, "To an ancient gramophone which required winding every two minutes, we danced the Roger de Coverley while the fog swirled against the Gothic windows, and indoors a green yule log emitted such dense smoke that the guests were blinded and choking."

In the 1930s, the stately homes of England were collapsing into the arms of the National Trust or Mother Ruin. Desereted by their inheritors, crippled by debt, the servants dead or fled, the silver sold, they faced extinction. One by one, they were demolished, institutionalised or nationalised. For half a century, that has been their perceived fate. To take on a stately home, let alone to build a new one, has been seen as a clear sign of madness.

Yet last week an intriguing passage appeared in a dry Whitehall document called PPG7 (Revised). These are the planning orders by which Britain is truly governed. They have more impact on the ap-

Stately homes of England in the lurch

Simon Jenkins

pearance and character of the nation than a hundred subsidies, policy initiatives and short-term gimmicks emanating from Downing Street. Yet they pass by unnoticed in the Westminster chatter. The country they govern is one which Westminster rarely visits, namely provincial Britain.

It was a previous PPG, issued by Nicholas Ridley, that spawned the out-of-town shopping centres, caravans and bungalow estates that are ruining more British landscape than anything since the suburban sprawl before the last war. Planners and inspectors were encouraged to ignore town centre shopping, conserve countryside and pour traffic onto rural roads. The Ridley document is recognised to have been a catastrophe, but the damage is done.

The new guidance, from John Gummer, cannot undo this damage.

But it wants new country development to avoid such spoliation. It worries over design and seeks to rectify some of the ugliness associated with modern farming. Country-side should be respected and "isolated houses" avoided. So far so good. However, and this brings us back to Lacock, some isolated houses are a good thing. A new

house is welcome if it can "add to the tradition of the Country House which has done so much to enhance the English countryside". Such a house must be "clearly of the highest quality, truly outstanding in terms of its architecture and landscape design". As he yearns to be progenitor of new cathedrals and new bridges, Mr Gummer yearns also for new stately homes.

My first thought is that ministers crave landed-gentry status after the election. As they salivate over the options flowing from post-privatisation directorships, they already plan the barony and the Barsetshire estate. A neo-Wrenaissance pile by Quinlan Terry in the Cotswolds would do nicely. But PPG7 must stand in the way. Hence Mr Gummer's little easement.

This is all most odd. Large country houses are still being built in England. The architectural historian, John Martin Robinson, estimates that 400 substantial "country houses" have been built in England since the war, with no help from PPG7. Architects such as Julian Bicknell, John Outram, Denis Lasdun, Robert Adam and Quinlan Terry have designed them. Families such as Getty, Rausing, de Ferranti,

Castle on the North Wales coast, Poltimore House in Devon, Gibside in Durham, Downe Hall, a Palladian mansion in Dorset whose park is on the brink of becoming a housing estate. Mr Gummer might attend to Tortworth Court in Gloucestershire, by his favourite architect, Samuel Teulon.

ancient pile, its rooms leaking and deserted, its children gone, help impossible to find, the weekdays long and lonely. Yet flip through the official *Historic Houses Guide* and you can read of the names of the wealthy, the dedicated, the eccentric and the mad who have picked up the banner of stately home ownership and carried on the fight.

round the "embarrassed" estates of England for the National Trust in the 1930s, he met utter dismay that estates should be alienated from families that had held them for centuries. At Attingham in Shropshire, Lord Berwick was too humiliated even to talk about a sale. He shuddered and eventually died. During negotiations at Lyne in Cheshire, Lord Newton "sighed from morning to night, while Lady Newton lay prostrate on the sofa". Assets had become liabilities and it all seemed unfair. With some difficulty, the Trust tried to keep some link between a family and its house after transfer. It was not easy.

Today we treat most great houses

as in some sense the nation's collective inheritance. Most were built from the titles, rents and taxes of the community. Like churches, they belonged as much to neighbourhoods as to families. Mark Girouard has shown that houses and castles were open to allcomers at least into the 18th century. They were communities within communities.

The grand house in its estate is

Britain's most distinctive and lasting contribution to European culture. Nobody does them like us. Mr Gummer is right to hope that private owners can uphold that reputation. But he needs a different PPG. New country houses will build themselves. Old ones are the challenge.

Tradition and the politics of Babel

Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi, traces the origins of our political crisis to the eclipse of Judaeo-Christian morality since the Enlightenment

The *Politics of Hope* is an unusual, in fact unique, book for a Chief Rabbi to have written. It is written, not for Jews especially, but for all of us as members of a liberal democratic society. It is not about religion, except in the most general sense that its central concern is about how we can learn to live peacefully, responsibly and graciously together — a concern which morality, politics, religion and secular humanism all share. To write it, I have had, as it were, to disrobe and immerse myself in literatures I had never before studied. I did so because of my concern about certain acute structural weaknesses in contemporary society, and my dismay at the quality and depth of our public conversation as we approach the millennium and think about our collective future. The book is about a certain kind of crisis within Western liberal democracies, and how it might be overcome by a new and more effective style of politics.

My argument can be stated simply. There are two concepts of a free society, one liberal, the other libertarian. For the past 50 years the libertarian view has prevailed. Shared by British and American politicians on the Left and Right, it maintains that a free society is ideally one in which individuals are left free to pursue their own choices.

The central question of politics is whether this is best achieved by governments doing as much as possible or as little should we have a maximalist or minimalist state?

The maximalists argue that the task of the State is to give everyone as far as possible the resources with which to pursue their private vision of the good life. The minimalists argue that this is best done by the opposite strategy, namely by leaving as many resources as possible in the hands of individuals.

Philosophically, the debate has been between John Rawls and Robert Nozick. Economically, it has been between Keynes and Milton Friedman. Politically, it has been between the Roosevelt-Beveridge vision of a welfare state and the "small government" programmes of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. But both sides share an

ideal, however deeply they differ in the means they adopt to achieve it: namely, of an arena in which the State guarantees the freedom of the individual to realise his or her own choices. Morality has no part to play in politics beyond fair procedures and the transparency and accountability of governments. All significant moral decisions are to be made by individuals. Indeed, morality itself is a purely individual concern. On both views the key players — the only players — are the State and the individual. Beyond that, as Margaret Thatcher once said, "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families."

This is a tenable view, and there is only one thing to be said against it. It has been tried and it has failed. It has given rise to a social order — or more precisely, to a social disorder — more bleak than any within living memory. Today many parts of Britain and America are marked by vandalism, violent crime and a loss of civility; by the breakdown of the family and the widespread neglect of children; by an erosion of trust and a general loss of faith in the power of governments to cure some of our most deep-seated problems; and in a widespread sense that matters crucial to our future welfare are slipping beyond our control.

It is not my intention to criticise the past, second-guess the leaders of an earlier generation, or adopt the false righteousness of hindsight. The politics of the past have run their course, and we must search for a new way.

Fortunately, this is less difficult than it seems. We are able to go back to the writings of those who set out on the path towards a free society and reacquaint ourselves with what they had in mind. As soon as we do this we discover in many cases that their concerns are uncannily like ours, and they had wise things to say which we have since forgotten. Their view of politics was liberal rather than libertarian. Their central question was: how can we create a society in

Some moral issues are private, but not all are

Dr Sacks: to write *The Politics of Hope*, "I have had... to disrobe and immerse myself in literatures I had never before studied"

which everyone can participate, and everyone achieve the maximum possible dignity? Their answer was not to privatise morality and rule it out of order in political debate. Some important moral issues are private, but not all are. In particular, it is impossible to create a good society without a vigorous process of public debate and within our consensus about the kind of society we wish to create. Nor is the creation of society a matter, simply, of state action on the one hand and the private choices of individuals on the other. Societies are made not just by states and individuals, but also and crucially by what

control, to decisions in which we do not have a part. These are my views, but not mine alone. Increasingly, they have come to be shared by philosophers, economists, social commentators and literary critics. Most importantly, they have begun to be adopted by politicians at both ends of the political spectrum — by Democrats and Republicans in America, and members of the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democratic parties in Britain. There was nothing wrong with the politics of collectivism and the politics of private initiative, but their greatest flaw is in the past and we are ready for something different and more challenging. My name for it is a vision once guided us, one that we loosely call the Judaeo-Christian tradition. It was not a single ethical system, more a related family of them. It did not answer all questions, and even when it was at its height, there were vexed moral debates. But it taught us moral habits. It gave us a framework of virtue, it embodied ideals. It emphasised the value of institutions — the family, the school, the community — as vehicles through which one generation hands on its ideals to the next. In its broad outlines it was shared by poor and

rich alike, by miners, labourers, politicians, teachers, the police, judges, fellows of Oxford and Cambridge colleges, and children in the village school. You could catch traces of its influence from pubs to pulpits to cricket matches. It bound us together as a nation and gave an entire society its bearings.

That tradition has been comprehensively displaced. In its stead has come a variety of substitutes: ethics of work and success, cults of physical fitness, consumerism and salvation-by-shopping, therapies, New Age mysticisms, alternative lifestyles, sub and counter-cultures, resurgent ethnicities of multi-kinds, and Internet-surfing as a mode of global identity. Never before have we been faced with such kaleidoscopic variety, but it fails to cohere. It does not provide us with the resources to connect our present with an identifiable past and future. It does not give unity to a life. It does not lend structure and stability to our relationships. It does not connect our private desires with a larger purpose of which we are a part. It is less like music, more like noise.

The alternative world we have come to inhabit has its roots deep in history. In my book I follow it back to Hobbes in the 17th century. Others would date its genesis earlier still. It did not come into being as a result of Thatcherism or Reaganomics in the 1980s, or the "permissive society" of the 1960s, or the welfare state of the 1940s. Each of these merely carried further tendencies that were present long before. That is why serious thinkers have understood that what is really at stake in the present debate is the Enlightenment itself as an adequate account of human nature and rationality.

Many aspects of that revolution in thought were necessary and beneficial. We could not undo them, nor should we wish to. But in one aspect it was simply wrong, in its attempt to assimilate our understanding of humanity to science. The belief was that just as science was opening the way to limitless progress in our understanding and control of the physical world, so a scientific morality would create an order of rational tolerance and benevolent human beings, free of the conflicts and prejudices of the past.

Like the Tower of Babel, libertarianism aimed too high

That was a noble undertaking, but like the Tower of Babel it was aimed too high, and the result is that we find it increasingly difficult to communicate with one another. We are left, like the builders of the tower, isolated and confused.

Fortunately, we are not without hope. The Judaeo-Christian heritage never disappeared, and it exists today as a great reservoir of moral energy and aspiration. Nor are we called to abandon the heritage of the Enlightenment, for it taught us two things that must never be forgotten: that religion is not science, neither is it politics. Religion is not the best way of understanding what is; its domain is in the realm of what ought to be. Nor is it an appropriate vehicle of power. In these respects the Enlightenment was closer to truth than the religious establishments of the day.

But in one respect it simply failed to understand the nature of human society. We are not atoms, held together by the force-field of the State. We are children and parents, neighbours and friends. We are self-conscious beings, knowing what it is to feel the pain of loneliness, yet not willing to abdicate our selfhood in total fusion with others. We seek individuality and relationship — individuality through relationship. We learn to pronounce the "We" the better to be able to say "I". This is born in the intricate dynamic of society, beginning with the family and extending outward, through which we learn to trust others and to act so that others can trust us. This requires us to internalise a complex of rules, virtues, dispositions and habits mediating between the self and others, allowing us to sustain relationships without the use of threat or force. As John Macmurray reminds us, these habits are precarious and need constant renewal. "The institutions by which society maintains itself are not natural," he writes. "They are artefacts, and they are maintained by effort in order to sustain the personal life of men and women, and to prevent a relapse into the barbarism of a nearly organic life." As we have come to know all too well in the 20th century, civilisation has a thin skin, and is easily wounded.

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● *The Politics of Hope* (Jonathan Cape, £15.99) will be published on March 6.

On Monday, Jonathan Sacks argues that the renormalisation of society is the antidote to despair

High times

ONE OF the most dangerous artistic partnerships of recent years is once again on the cards. Ralph Steadman, anarchic cartoonist and wine lover, is about to team up with Hunter S. Thompson, drug-taking "gonzo" journalist, with whom he rampaged across America in the 1970s in the name of reportage.

Steadman has been asked to

appear as a character witness in May on behalf of Thompson, whom he once described as one of the most evil men he knows, in a drink-drive case.

Thompson, who lives a hermit-like existence in Aspen, Colorado, with a Magnum 45 for company, was breathalysed returning from a party to celebrate victory in a

campaign to prevent the expansion of Aspen's airport. The police were waiting for him under the bridge to trolleys," he said contemptuously of his arrest.

Steadman met Thompson in 1970 when they joined forces to cover the Kentucky Derby. Later, they collaborated to report on the America's Cup, when Steadman took drugs for the first time. "I kept asking what the pills were that Hunter was gobbling all the time, so he gave me one," he explains. The experiment was not a success, ending with the reporter and his illustrator painting obscenities about the Pope on the hull of a yacht.

"I'm a different kind of person when I'm with Hunter," Steadman says. "The animal in me comes out." He adds that he will defend his friend to the hilt at the court case in May. "He's a fine, upstanding human being."

Health scare

EDWINA CURRIE has been caught bungling off. After appearing mute and weary at an afternoon gathering of the EU Trade Committee, she failed to appear later in the day at a meeting of MPs and Stonewall, the gay rights activi-



Mr Lee," she gasped. "Teresa Gorman is on the telephone and would like a word."

Lee, a decent, reasonable man driven to rage by Heath's rude dismissals of his efforts to preserve democracy in Hong Kong, went back in to take the call. Having introduced himself and congratulated him on his performance against Heath, she said: "You dealt with Deng for years; we've had to deal with Sir Edward for more than 20." Lee quite sympathised.

● The saintly cookery writer Delia Smith, who was recently appointed



"Look at it this way; we've missed 18 years under the Tories."

Elderly leader

AFTER his blazing-eyed confrontation with Deng Xiaoping's old mucker, Sir Edward Heath, 80, on *Newsnight* earlier this week, Martin Lee, leader of Hong Kong's Democrats, was leaving the BBC when he was called back by a scampering researcher. "Mr Lee,"



Lee

had

been

beaving

over-fondly

with

a male

lion

friend.

For two days each week, the lion is locked in a cage with his chum and together they frolic, tease and gambol in a manner that reminds onlookers of Christopher Isherwood in prewar Berlin.

At Conservative Central Office, which is locked in battle with Downing Street over the effectiveness of the advertisements, the beast has a nickname: Dandy Lion.

Needled

TONY BLAIR branched into fashion at the *What the Papers Say* Awards in London yesterday, de-



fending the sweater that his wife was photographed wearing recently when off-duty at the weekend.

Cherie Booth had been snapped

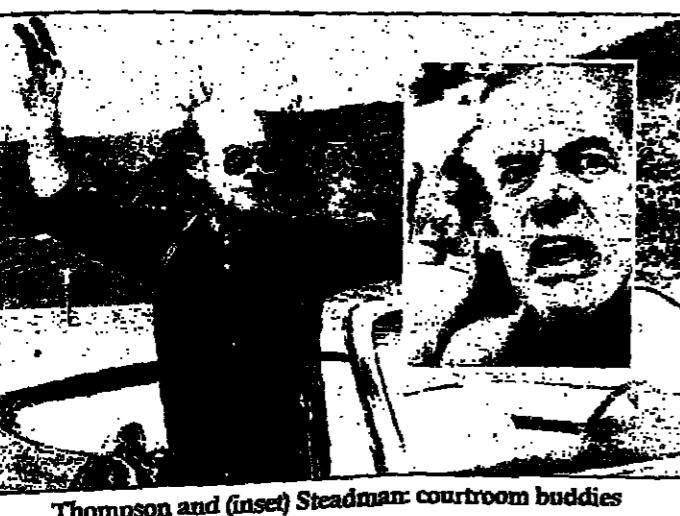
leaving a supermarket in a thick

woolly jumper far removed from

her usual wear.

"My wife has appeared in the newspapers over the last few days," the Labour leader said. "That jumper that she wore, look. I bought that jumper. Greater love hath no woman than to give up her fashion taste for her husband. I still like it and that's as defiant as I'm going to get. And it did not cost £300."

P.H.S



Thompson and (inset) Steadman: courtroom buddies



GUIDE IN PERPLEXITY

A rabbi's brief history of our time

Rabbi means "my master" or "teacher of the law". Where other faiths have priests or pastors, Judaism has rabbis. Hence many of the most influential teachers in history have been Jewish, from Moses and Jesus to Marx and Freud. Great crises often produce great teachers. In the late 12th century, a period of bewildering political and intellectual change in Europe, Rabbi Maimonides wrote his *Guide for the Perplexed*, combining the best of Jewish and gentile thought. As our own catastrophic century ends, many people in the Western democracies find themselves in a different but no less profound perplexity. Many would welcome guidance in our political and moral crisis, though religious leaders are nowadays rarely as persuasive as such a guide needs to be. In Dr Jonathan Sacks we may have found one.

The Chief Rabbi's wide learning, didactic gifts and personal charisma are attested by his previous appearances on the secular stage, such as his 1990 Reith Lectures. *The Times* has championed his forthright views on the role of religion, and has also supported his courageous but controversial attendance this week at a memorial meeting for the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn.

Now Dr Sacks has written a remarkable book, addressed to Jews and non-Jews alike, drawing on the best of contemporary secular thought. The first of three extracts appears in *The Times* today. *The Politics of Hope* would be remarkable simply as a compendium of scholarship; it is, indeed, a brief history of our time. But it is more. The Chief Rabbi crisply analyses the malaise already identified by Francis Lawrence and others, and offers his own solution.

The problem as he sees it is the progressive demoralisation of liberal society since the Enlightenment, and especially over the past half-century. The rise of the welfare state and its dependency culture, of the permissive society and libertarian individualism, have in Dr Sacks's view extended throughout society an atomistic view of human nature which was until recently confined to an educated élite. This libertarian revolution involved the sacrifice of an older,

less selfish and materialistic view of the good life, according to which man is a social animal, rooted in the polis. It also meant the privatising of the public sphere, and the privatisation of morality.

The solution follows naturally: demoralisation must be met by remoralisation. That, of course, is easier said than done; Dr Sacks is not so naïve as to suppose that appeals for moral regeneration will readily reduce the crime statistics, or that sermons which have failed to fill the churches and synagogues will somehow galvanise a cynical secular society. But he believes passionately that a moral transformation which has happened before can happen again: just as it did thousands of years ago in the Holy Land, and just as it did in Victorian Britain. In each case the secret resource was the same: the Judeo-Christian tradition encodes a strategy for moral recovery.

What Dr Sacks means by "the politics of hope" is a prophetic, not an apocalyptic or despairing, view of society. That means faith in the moral basis of humanity. After Dunblane, Dr Sacks says that he, like countless others, experienced a moment of national self-awareness. "Morality," he writes, "is civilisation's greatest attempt to humanise it."

This rich and eloquent book is vulnerable to selective quotation. It will be plundered on the Left, for whom his diagnosis of contemporary ills is more useful than his austere "politics of responsibility". On the Right, his message may be oversimplified into a crude authoritarianism. His espousal of American communalism will not appeal to all, though he imposes his own distinctive rigour on an often woolly-minded movement. His erudition sometimes leads him to cite with enthusiasm thinkers whose ideologies he does not share: thus he quotes approvingly from John Macmurray, Tony Blair's mentor, though he has little in common with the Scottish philosopher's ethical socialism. But such eclecticism is a strength, not a weakness, in a book which deserves to become a key text, not only during the election campaign, but long after.

TOO LONG TO LANGUISH

The Bridgewater Four were scandalously treated

It has taken 18 years for the men convicted of murdering Carl Bridgewater to prove their innocence. One of the four, Patrick Molloy, died in jail, disputing his conviction to the last. He has been deprived of the joy that the other three felt yesterday as they were released by the Court of Appeal to breathe London air for the first time since James Callaghan was Prime Minister.

There can be few greater crimes that the State can commit than depriving innocent people of their liberty. These men have spent what should have been the best years of their lives in jail. Though no sum of money could ever wipe out the trauma that they have suffered, they should nonetheless be handsomely compensated.

But while Michael and Vincent Hickey and James Robinson readjust to the world of computers, video recorders, out-of-town supermarkets and Tory governments, the Home Office should be examining how this wrongful conviction could have been allowed to stand for so long. It should also try to ensure that the policemen who secured the conviction are themselves brought to justice.

For the evidence which eventually led to the men's release showed tampering on a criminal scale. Mr Molloy always claimed that he had been tricked and intimidated into signing a false confession. He was shown a confession that one of the other co-accused, Vincent Hickey, had allegedly signed. The new evidence produced to the Court of Appeal showed that the Hickey "confession" had been forged by policemen from the No 4 Regional Crime Squad.

The evidence arose out of an "Esda" test on Mr Molloy's confession, which revealed the imprint of the forged signature written on the page above. Since Mr Hickey was several miles away in another police station, being questioned by different detectives, the confession could not have been genuine. Mr Molloy's claim that he had been shown this forged was never believed in the many reviews of the case since 1978.

Tragically, the Hickey signature was discovered in 1990, but until two weeks ago nobody realised its significance. Great credit should go to Jim Nichol, solicitor to the men, who decided to go back over all the evidence in preparation for their latest appeal. Mr Molloy's confession was always crucial to the case against all three men since there was no forensic evidence linking them to the scene, no murder weapon and no witnesses.

The West Midlands Serious Crime Squad, which included the detective who falsified Mr Hickey's signature, was wound up in 1989 after evidence came to light of other fabricated confessions and planted evidence in 23 cases during the 1980s. There is much less chance of such behaviour happening today, with the safeguards introduced by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. And although police forces still feel under pressure to secure convictions, particularly in child murders, the police culture is gradually changing. But the Government owes it to these three men — and to the memory of the fourth — to inquire into the circumstances of this miscarriage of justice. It must never be allowed to happen again.

LOVE, FIDEL

Castro reveals a cuddly side in letters to his mistress

Six love letters, previously unpublished, have just surfaced in Spain. Written by Fidel Castro over four decades ago to Nata Reuelta, his mistress, they are not the greatest examples of the epistolary art. Self-conscious, didactic and much too long, they are uncomfortably like his rambling speeches to the captive and the faithful.

As our Madrid correspondent writes today, some lines in the letters reveal Señor Castro in his true colours. "I believe that love also has its dialectic, antithesis and synthesis — just like a Revolution, which would not exist without a Counter-revolution." Now that is the man we know so well, the inflexible ideologue with whom Cuba has had to put up for nearly 40 years.

But wait: that is not the whole picture. The letters occasionally reveal an awkward and touching tenderness. Señor Castro was capable of penning some quite cuddly stuff. Consider these lines, in another letter to Nata: "What does 'me too' mean at the end of your letters? Ah! I know... Do you really love me? Swear to me! Even though I do you?" Elsewhere, impressively amorous, he promises to crush her in his arms "like a flower", and to hold her "sacred, in the ultimate recesses of the heart".

Letters to lovers and spouses written by the famous often provide clues to their personalities which one would struggle to find elsewhere. The revelations are not always flattering. Albert Einstein's letters to

his wife, for example, show him to have been a cold-blooded male chauvinist who loved her less than his equations.

Bertrand Russell, too, is ill-served by his letters. Writing to Ottoline Morrell, he shows that his eloquence could desert him when he moved from philosophy to passion: "Loving you is like loving a red-hot poker, which is a worse bedfellow than even Lytton's Umbrella; every caress brings on agony." And only this week, serious posthumous damage was done to the feminist reputation of Simone de Beauvoir when old letters to an American lover revealed that she referred to herself as "an obedient Arab wife" and a "little loving frog".

It is refreshing, however, when love letters of the famous betray the baser instincts. No one can read this line from Flaubert's letters to Louise Colet — with its stylish mixture of irony and lust — and not warm to the man who gave us *Madame Bovary*. "Yes, for me you are a diversion, but one of the best. The most complete kind. You relieve me emotionally, for the thought of you fills me with tenderness and my heart reposes on that thought just as when I lie on you." Flaubert's efforts were better than Señor Castro's, naturally, but the latter's letters have their own potent romance. The real pity, of course, is that the young Cuban writer of love letters grew into a long-winded old Communist tyrant. It must have been that damned dialectic.

Letters to lovers and spouses written by the famous often provide clues to their personalities which one would struggle to find elsewhere. The revelations are not always flattering. Albert Einstein's letters to

Demand by life insurers for evidence of genetic tests

From Professor David de Bono

From the Chair of the Huntingdon's Disease Association

Sir, I very rarely find myself bating for the insurance industry but I do feel that your report of February 19, "Life insurers demand gene test results", may unnecessarily alarm those affected by inherited conditions.

When applying for life insurance, disclosure of a genetic test result has always been a requirement. Failure to disclose a genetic test result could result in a policy being declared void. People attending genetic clinics for pre-test counselling are advised to examine their insurance requirements before taking a test.

In the case of Huntingdon's disease it is usually possible to obtain insurance if you are "at risk" as indicated by your family history, albeit with loaded premiums (averaging 50 per cent). However, if you, if you had received a positive test result, indicating that at some future time you would develop Huntingdon's disease, your chances of obtaining life insurance would have been negligible.

The policy statement by the Association of British Insurers changes this situation in limited circumstances — i.e. people applying for life insurance for a sum of up to £100,000 linked to a new mortgage will still be required to reveal the result of any genetic test; but if the test is positive and would therefore normally have been to the detriment of the applicant, the result will be disregarded. Family history will continue to be taken into account. In effect this is an improvement for people in this situation.

Meanwhile, as an association, we shall continue to advise our members to seek independent advice with regard to insurance requirements before embarking on a genetic test. It is important for people to apply to companies that look more favourably on those at risk of an inherited condition and to avoid being refused insurance.

Yours sincerely,
SUE WATKIN, Chair,
Huntingdon's Disease Association,
108 Battersea High Street, SW1.
February 19.

From Mr K. D. Boyd

Sir, The insistence of insurers on knowing the results of voluntary DNA tests raises serious issues that must be addressed by the next government.

Being health-conscious I volunteered for an ECT test several years ago, even though I was, and remain, perfectly healthy. The test showed that I had a slightly abnormal heart rhythm. As a result insurance companies refused to insure me.

My GP said there was nothing to worry about as not everybody has the same heart rhythm, and later examination by two consultant cardiologists, which included a full workout on a treadmill, confirmed that I am healthier than most and that, so long as I continue with my healthy lifestyle and remain fit, I should live a normal lifespan. I have thus been punished for showing an interest in my health.

Yours faithfully,
PANOS C. MAVRON,
71 Linden Way, Southgate, N14.
February 19.

From Mr K. D. Boyd

Sir, The benefits of ever-advancing knowledge in genetic make-up outweigh the harm. The more we know, the better the prospect for mankind.

I suspect that when the shouting has died down the practice of excluding or loading the insurance of impaired lives will be as difficult with the new knowledge as it was before.

There are a number of sufferers from

Yours sincerely,
DAVID de BONO,
University of Leicester.
Department of Cardiology,
Glenfield General Hospital,
Leicester LE3 9QP.

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BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 22 1997



JAPAN

High Court finds for Hoechst to settle battle over patent

BP faces \$100m damages bill

BY FRASER NELSON

BRITISH PETROLEUM is facing damages of more than \$100 million after the High Court found that it had infringed a patent belonging to Hoechst, the German chemicals group.

The oil company is understood to be heading for the heaviest patent damages claim in British legal history. It was found to have been using a filter patented by Hoechst Celanese for six years, and could now be forced to hand over every penny of profit that it made.

BP, the world's largest producer of acetic acid, said

yesterday that while it was phasing out all use of the patented filter, it was still appealing against the decision. It added that the ruling would not affect either of its two acid production plants in Hull.

A spokeswoman for BP said: "This is a historical matter. BP Chemicals was using the filters in just a tiny proportion of our acetic acid production streams many years ago. We have almost completely phased it out."

However, the patented filter is still being used in one of its two acetic acid plants, and is unlikely to be phased out until April. It has been ordered to

pay Hoechst compensation for the full period until the filter is completely out of use.

The argument centres on a filter which purifies acetic acid by removing certain iodides, allowing the cheaper and faster production of vinyl acetate from acetic acids.

Hoechst argues that if BP had not used the filter, which it calls a "guard bed", the company might not have been able to carry such a command of the market.

BP is playing down the

importance of the filter, and

it says it would be disappointed if it had to pay its rival as much as \$25 million in compensation. The company

hopes to limit its damages by arguing that the guard bed was employed as an extra in the production line.

Mr Justice Laddie told BP: "You are going to say that the guard bed is the tail and not the dog, and it will be crucial to your submission that you are right."

He indicated that Hoechst stood to gain more by taking the unusual step of claiming for the profits that BP made from the acid, rather than the in-house rate.

BP has now been instructed to hand over details of how

much acid was produced in the two plants over the six years, how much it was sold

for and to whom.

This is the second time that

Hoechst has opted for the profits, it could stand to gain compensation of up to \$130 million

rather than the \$50 million to \$100 million range expected at present.

As BP sold most of the refined acid to its subsidiaries, Hoechst could claim even more money if the court agreed to evaluate the acid on what BP could have sold it for in the market rather than its in-house rate.

The two companies will meet in the High Court again next month, when Hoechst will say whether it has decided to opt for the court deciding the amount of damages or to take a risk on the profits. The final damages payout is not expected to come through until the summer.

Hoechst Celanese was represented by Taylor Joyson Garrett, the City solicitors. Bird & Bird represented BP.

Pearson sells holding in Hong Kong broadcaster

BY ERIC REGULY

PEARSON, the media and entertainment group, dismantled the key component of its Asian strategy yesterday with the sale of its 10 per cent stake in Television Broadcasts, Hong Kong's leading broadcaster, for \$11.1 million.

Pearson acquired the TVB interest only two years ago, paying £103.6 million. Greg Dyke, head of Pearson Television, said: "Our original plan was to use it to expand our investments in Asia."

Pearson made only a little progress together. Their biggest accomplishment was creating a satellite TV joint venture in India, called Home TV. The venture will not be affected by Pearson's withdrawal from TVB. Pearson said it would pursue other opportunities in Asia, but did not provide details.

The TVB stake was sold to Shaw Brothers, a cinema and entertainment group in Hong Kong which owns the world's largest library of Chinese

films. Shaw already owned 23.5 per cent of TVB.

Pearson received £3.5 million in dividends over two years from the TVB investment, but they did not cover the cost of capital. The sale proceeds will help to cut debt.

The TVB sale appears to be part of Pearson's efforts to focus on the group, eliminating peripheral and non-control investments. Marjorie Scardino, the new chief executive, is expected to announce a series of disposals over the next few years.

Analysts said they could include Pearson's remaining 4.3 per cent stake in BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster, the half stake in the Lizards investment house and perhaps some newsletters and magazines.

In the longer term, the City believes that Pearson may sell Pearson Television, which includes Thames TV, Select TV, Grandy and FT Television. Mr Dyke would not comment on speculation that he would like to purchase the division in a management buyout. He said he had not discussed the idea with Ms Scardino.

In a separate development, Pearson said it would provide more details about its investigation into Penguin's accounting on March 17, when its annual results are released. Pearson dismissed an employee in Penguin's New Jersey office this month for apparently giving unauthorised discounts to book retailers. Pearson is taking a charge of up to £100 million to cover what it describes as the improper accounting.



Philippe Bourguignon, chairman and chief executive of Euro Disney who steered the company through its deep financial crisis, is leaving for a post at Club Mediterranee. Gilles Pélisson, president and CEO, will take on the role

Auditor pays ADT £50m to settle dispute

BY GAVIN LUMSDEN

BDO Binder Hamlyn, the former accountancy partnership of Binder Hamlyn, has agreed to end a seven-year battle and pay nearly \$86 million (£50 million) in an out-of-court settlement with ADT, the American electronic security provider.

This is almost half the amount the firm was ordered to pay in damages to ADT by the High Court in December 1995 and thereby removes the threat of £34 million personal liability faced by 150 former partners.

The firm said the settlement, which consists of a \$77.5 million immediate payment, with \$8.6 million deferred, fell within its insurance cover. It has withdrawn an appeal scheduled for later this year.

John Newton, a Binder Hamlyn spokesman, expressed mixed feelings about the settlement but added: "The costs and uncertainty of the outcome of litigation have influenced us in taking this essentially commercial decision. We firmly believe the original judgment was unsound and we are aware that there was considerable professional interest in following the progress of our appeal hearing. Nevertheless, this settlement removes uncertainty from our partners and draws a line under the financial and time costs of the case."

The dispute centred on the BDO Binder Hamlyn's auditing of Britannia Security Group in 1989, a US firm that ADT bought for £105 million in 1990. After the acquisition ADT discovered profits had been *hugely inflated* and that the company's real value was £40 million. ADT's suit against BDO Binder Hamlyn shocked the accountancy



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BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET

FTSE 100	4306.8	(-19.3)
Yield	3.62%	
FTSE All share	2115.45	(-7.3)
Nikkei	15034.54	(-17.17)
New York	8912.76	(-16.82)
FTSE Composite	891.57	(-1.19)

Stock	Price	Change
Federal Funds	5.75%	(0.75)
Long Bond	9.04%	(0.04)
Yield	6.64%	(0.04)

Stock	Price	Change
3M Interbank	9.5%	(0.5%)
Life long gilt future (Mar)	713.5	(11.5%)

Stock	Price	Change
New York	1,612.55	(1,612.55)
London	1,511.14	(1,511.14)
DM	2,732.2	(2,722.2)
FF	9,205.5	(9,195.5)
SF	2,373.8	(2,363.8)
Yen	198.84	(198.84)
£ Index	97.2	(97.2)

Stock	Price	Change
London	1,583.05	(1,583.05)
DM	6,746.05	(6,736.05)
FF	1,471.75	(1,471.75)
SF	2,373.85	(2,363.85)
Yen	198.845	(198.845)
£ Index	97.25	(97.25)

Stock	Price	Change
Tokyo close	122.23	
Mon-Fri	122.23	
Brent 15-day (May)	519.85	(519.85)
London close	530.25	(534.35)

* denotes midday trading price

Shield soars despite statement

BY JEREMY LAURANCE
HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

SHIELD Diagnostics leapt another £1.10 to £5.26 yesterday in spite of publication of a carefully worded statement intended to dampen speculation.

Shield, whose shares were 15p at the start of the month, is working on a test that could replace cholesterol screening. The statement included a letter from George Miller of the Medical Research Council Wolfson Centre of Preventive Medicine in London who is coordinating a trial of 15 different markers of heart disease.

One of these is APT, made by Shield, which was shown in a pilot study to hold some promise and this appeared to be confirmed by a preliminary analysis of results.

Rabbatts resigns from Centrica

BY ERIC REGULY

HEATHER RABBATS, believed to be Britain's best paid town hall chief, yesterday resigned as non-executive director of Centrica, which demerged from British Gas earlier this week.

Ms Rabbatts, £115,000-a-year chief executive of Lambeth council, said: "It was a matter of personal regret that she had submitted her resignation.

Pressure from Tory and Liberal Democrat councillors, who said she should devote all of her time to fixing Lambeth's affairs, was behind her decision to resign.

Hanson votes for split

Hanson shareholders yesterday voted overwhelmingly for the demerger of Energy Group. Its shares will trade separately in London and New York from Monday.

The split will give shareholders one Energy share for every ten Hanson shares held. On the so-called grey market in London yesterday Energy shares fell 6.4p to 520p.

Talks accord

Britain and America reported progress in talks over the past three days toward a new free-market "open skies" aviation agreement. A State Department negotiator said there was progress "toward an agreed text for a new bilateral accord".

Share placing

Bakrychik Gold raised £7.1 million via a share placing in London yesterday. The new shares were placed at 200p each and represent about 9.9 per cent of existing capital. After the placing Indo-China Goldfields, a Canadian company, will own 27.9 per cent of Bakrychik.

Stordata up

Stordata Solutions, the car security and data storage company, earned pre-tax profits of £1.5 million in the year to November 30, compared with losses of £473,000 in the previous year. Earnings were 1.25p a share (1.27p loss). A final dividend of 0.35p a share makes a total of 0.5p (nil).

Allied higher

Allied Leisure, the ten-pin bowling company, reported pre-tax profits of £1.4 million for the six months to December 31, up from £515,000 previously. Earnings rose to 1.07p a share from 0.63p. The interim dividend is 0.33p a share (nil). Ken Scobie, chairman, said trading "continues to be patchy." The shares fell 6p to 40p.



Nord Anglia Education, the education services provider whose chairman is Kevin McNeany, will be valued at £18 million when its shares begin trading on the stock market next week. Nord will raise £9.69 million via a share placing at 140p

Christian Salvesen rebels seek support in the City

BY SARAH CUNNINGHAM

DISSIDENT Christian Salvesen shareholders who oppose the demerger of the company's Aggreko equipment hire subsidiary are seeking the support of institutional investors for their campaign against the board.

John Grant, formerly finance director of LucasVarity, who was recruited by the dissidents to lead their fight, will take the battle to the City next week, meeting institutions before a shareholders' meeting on March 3.

Shareholders are to vote on a proposed special 34p foreign income dividend worth a total of £100 million. They have already been paid an enhanced dividend of £50 million. In the second half of the year, they will be asked to vote on spinning off Aggreko, the

equipment hire business. Salvesen's board, which last year turned down a bid approach by Hays, the logistics company, unveiled details of the proposed FID yesterday. It will be combined with a share consolidation to have the same effect as a share buyback. The rebels, including Sir

Gerald Elliot, a former chairman and a member of the Salvesen family, want the proposal thrown out and to replace Chris Masters, the chief executive, with Mr Grant. Sir Gerald, who has a 2 per cent stake, claims to have the support of shareholders — all family members — with

about 10 per cent of the capital. The family controls 38 per cent of the group.

Mr Grant said the group should be able to deliver value through growth. "Just giving money back to shareholders is defeatist," he said.

Tempus, page 30

Ex-Swithland directors jailed

Two former directors of a Leicestershire car dealership were yesterday sent to prison for a multimillion-pound fraud after a joint investigation by the Serious Fraud Office. Leicester fraud squad and Customs and Excise (Robert Miller writes).

John Hayes, founder and

chairman of the Swithland Group, received a five-year sentence and was disqualified from acting as a company director for ten years.

David Sharratt, 51, Swithland finance director, received a three-and-a-half year sentence and was barred as a

company director for seven years. Sentencing at Oxford Crown Court, Judge Richard May said: "Those who loaned money in reliance on the figures you gave lost it all or a great deal of it. This strikes at the heart of the trust on which commerce must depend."

Tempus, page 30

West Ham plans £50m flotation in the summer

BY JASON NISSL

WEST HAM United, the struggling Premiership club, is to float in the summer with a market value of at least £50 million after raising £1.6 million in a private share placing yesterday.

Terence Brown, chairman, said the money will be used to complete the payments on the £2.5 million purchase of strikers John Hanson and Paul Kitson. The club may raise more before it floats. West Ham has appointed Nomura, the investment bank, to advise on the float.

The executors of the estate of the late Matthew Harding are preparing to place part of their 25 per cent stake in Chelsea Village, owners of Chelsea, it emerged yesterday. The holding, which cost £15 million, is now worth

more than £50 million.

Chelsea recorded a pre-tax

loss of £404,000 in the six months to 31 December. Loss per share was 2.7p. Despite spending £12.5 million on players in the period and receiving only £6 million back, Chelsea's accounting allowed it to record a £31,000 profit on player trading.

The club said it fund

raising to pay for the redevelopment of its ground at Stamford Bridge was nearly completed.

Chelsea has raised £26.3

million from share placings

and has placed another nine

million shares, which were

yesterday priced at 161.5p.

The consortium, led by

Albert Scardino, husband of

Pearson's chief executive,

bidding for Nottingham

Forest yesterday raised its

offer to £19 million.

This matches the bid by the

group led by Nigel Wray,

chairman of Burford Forest

shareholders will decide on

the bids at an extraordinary

meeting on Monday night.

Wimpey Homes is buying

Roker Park, the home of

Sunderland Football Club

since 1898, for £1.3 million.

Sunderland move to a new

42,000-seat stadium in the

summer.

GDP growth rate revised up to 2.7%

UK ECONOMIC growth in the fourth quarter of last year was yesterday confirmed at 0.8 per cent although minor revisions to back data lifted the year-on-year growth rate of gross domestic product to 2.7 per cent from the 2.6 per cent reported in provisional figures from the Office for National Statistics.

Non-oil GDP figures were unrevised, with growth of 0.7 per cent in the quarter and 2.5 per cent year on year. The figures showed consumer spending remained the main engine for growth, rising 0.9 per cent in the quarter. Investment remained disappointing, with growth of only 0.2 per cent in the fourth quarter.

Hickson to reduce debt

HICKSON International, the speciality chemicals company that has spent a year in heavy restructuring, plans a major disposal aimed at reducing further its debt burden. Hickson reported a loss before tax of £9.2 million, which included a goodwill write-off following the sale of Hickson Manuf. Pre-tax profit before exceptional items was £7.8 million (£5.9 million) and underlying operating profit improved by £3 million to £14 million. Borrowings fell to £56 million from £82 million. Tempus, page 30

On track for ScotRail

THE Government's rail privatisation programme remained on track when a potential delay was averted in Scotland. The Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority voted unanimously to endorse the choice of National Express as preferred bidder for ScotRail. The authority, comprising 12 councils in western Scotland, is ScotRail's biggest single customer and stipulates timetables and services in its area. The endorsement follows three years of negotiations involving rail regulators.

UBS takes a loss

UBS, Switzerland's largest bank, had a loss of SFr348 million (£145 million) in 1996 after a SFr3 billion charge against bad debts and restructuring costs of SFr120 million. In the previous year profits were SFr1.67 billion. Personnel expenses last year rose by 17 per cent due "in large part to performance and profit-related bonuses," said the bank. The dividend is unchanged at SFr32 a share. Mathis Cabialavetta, chief executive, said UBS hoped for a net profit this year of more than SFr2 billion. Tempus, page 30

Aer Rianta diversifies

THE threatened closure of duty-free shops within the EU by mid-1999 has prompted Aer Rianta, the state-owned airport authority in the Irish Republic, to join NatWest Ventures in a 40 per cent stake in Birmingham International Airport for £143 million. Aer Rianta is believed to have paid £113 million for a 25 per cent stake. The restructuring deal paves the way for a £1250 million investment programme at the airport. Last year half of Aer Rianta's profits, around £18 million, was from duty-free shops.

Grafton profits build

STRONG growth in the Irish construction sector helped to lift pre-tax profit at Grafton, the building materials group based in Dublin, by 41 per cent to £15.5 million in 1996. Turnover rose 25 per cent to £192 million. Earnings rose 44 per cent to £82.7p a share. All Grafton's operations in the Republic recorded double-digit growth in turnover. In the UK, a string of small acquisitions during the year in England helped to lift turnover 30 per cent to £50 million. A final dividend of 11p a share lifts the total 40 per cent to 17.5p.

Shell joint venture slips

SHOWA SHELL SEKIYU, the Japanese oil refining company that is 50 per cent owned by Royal Dutch/Shell, suffered a 36.2 per cent fall in pre-tax profits to 12.8 billion yen in 1996. The company was adversely affected by poor retail prices for oil products and strong crude prices. In yen-based terms the price of Dubai crude, a Middle Eastern crude used as a benchmark in Asia, rose 41.4 per cent in 1996 because of strong crude prices and the yen's depreciation against the dollar.

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Capita uses placing to fund acquisitions

THE Capita Group, the outsourcing and professional support services provider, will become the UK's largest provider of pensions administration services after the acquisition of Hartshead Solway for a total of £4.75 million (Martin Barrow writes).

Hartshead's clients include more than 100 private and public sector clients. In the year to March 31, 1996, the company earned pre-tax profits of £544,000 on income of £6.6 million.

Capita is also buying the 50 per cent that it does not own of DriveSafe Services from JHP Group for an initial £10 million and up to £5 million related to profits. DriveSafe administers theory tests for learner drivers. Capita is raising £11.85 million through a vendor placing of new shares at 610p each.

Tempus, page 30

TOURIST RATES

	Bank	Bank
Australia S	2.18	2.02
Austria S	2.01	1.95
Belgium Fr	58.94	54.64
Canada S	2.302	2.142
Denmark C	0.93	0.88
Finland Mkr	8.70	8.05
France Fr	2.57	2.52
Germany Dm	4.44	4.19
Hong Kong S	12.13	12.15
Iceland Ikr	1.08	1.00
Israel Shek	5.69	5.04
Italy Lira	212.20	198.20
Malta	0.655	0.600
Netherlands Gld	3.197	2.967
New Zealand S	1.27	1.24
Norway Kr	11.44	10.84
Portugal Esc	282.50	268.00
Spain Pts	241.00	224.00
Sweden Kr	12.59	11.79
Turkey Lira	202.60	186.00
USA S	1.712	1.582

Great train robbery?

After another set of rail managers collected massive windfall profits, and commuters faced train cancellations, rail privatisation was plunged into fresh political controversy. Was this the greatest rail robbery of all time?

Business — The Sunday Times tomorrow

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£1000 minimum investment required

£1000 minimum investment required

£1000 minimum investment required

A WORKING WEEK FOR: RICHARD GOODING

Airport chief takes off in the land of dragons

Jon Ashworth finds out how a white elephant came to fly and how an underground link is expected to help it to soar

Monday	C
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	

LONDON City airport is heading for smoother skies. New ownership has brought a touch of calm to this bleak outpost in London's Docklands. More than a million passengers will pass through its gates this year, and the best is yet to come. The opening of the Jubilee Line extension will, it is claimed, place London City just 18 minutes' ride from Westminster.

All this provides the perfect cut for Richard Gooding, who joined as managing director in August with a brief to steer London City through its new phase. He is set to embark on a programme of refurbishment that will transform the entire package. The terminal building and lounges will be spruced up and the car park resurfaced. There are plans to link the terminal with a 200-bed, four-star hotel, allowing business to check out and board their flights with a minimum of fuss.

The changes bear the mark of Dermot Desmond, a Dublin businessman who is fast building a diverse portfolio of investments. His interests include Celtic Football Club, aircraft leasing, property and hotels. He purchased Sandy Lane in Barbados for £38 million last year. Desmond paid £22.5 million for London City in October 1995, ending a disastrous run for John Mowlem, the construction group that built the airport.

London City opened in 1987, just before the collapse in property values that was to push Canary Wharf over the brink. Mowlem could only watch in horror as millions of pounds seeped away into the Docklands marshes. The jinx extended to airlines such as City Link, which pulled out in 1991 after running up a reputed £10 million in costs. Another carrier, Brymon, withdrew in 1993, and Conti-Flug went one better – it went bust.

The turning point came in early 1992, when London City's runway was extended to accommodate aircraft such as the BAe 146 "whisper jet", which has a range of 1,000 miles, bringing most leading European destinations within reach. By the end of the year, passenger numbers had risen from a low of 150,000 to about 185,000. The opening of the Limehouse Link significantly improved access to the City and central London.

Desmond, who passes through London City at least once a week, has brought the financial stability that the airport needs. Gooding says: "He's not an asset stripper. He's not that sort of investor at all. He is interested in businesses where he can come in at a good value-for-money price, and grow and enhance those businesses so that they become more valuable."

Desmond has timed his entry well. The airport will soon have a raft of new neighbours; among them Norton Healthcare, a US company that is building its European regional headquarters on the far side of the runway. A new business park is being launched, and there are plans – as yet unfinalised – to open London's biggest exhibition and conference centre. Wimpey Homes is building 111 homes around the Royal Docks. Deloitte & Touche is assessing the feasibility of building a £90 million national aquarium.

Such developments can only spur pass-

enger numbers, which hit 727,601 in 1996 and should comfortably exceed a million this year. Problems of access have been the main obstacle in the past – highlighted by controversial claims that the air port was only 20 minutes by car from the West End. After complaints the boast was amended to "less than 30 minutes".

Many continue to view Docklands as an impenetrable wasteland. As Gooding says: "A lot of people in London think that east of Tower Bridge it says 'There Be Dragons' on the map. It's seen as a lot of derelict warehouses, lots of narrow cobbled streets, and the legacy of some of the more famous criminals that operated in the area."

The opening of the Jubilee Line extension, scheduled for March 1998, is expected to make all the difference. Gooding says: "Westminster will be 18 minutes away. You'll be able to travel door-to-door between here and the City in under 30 minutes. Suddenly, we're going to be nearer than any other airport." Shuttle buses will cover the half mile between the airport and Canning Town station.

Gooding is well suited to this type of project. He joined from London Luton airport, which was turned round under his stewardship. In his five years there, Luton branched out from cheap holiday charter flights to include budget European services, using airlines such as Debonair. The airport grew into a

In some ways, that congestion factor at Heathrow is our biggest strength,

popular port of call for executive jets, attracted by the ability to fly in at any time of day or night.

Gooding is now training his sights on a more elusive quarry – the upmarket, time-conscious, business traveller. The intention is to increase the number of destinations – currently 20, served by 13 airlines – to take in all the leading business centres in Europe. Places such as Amsterdam, Berlin, Frankfurt, Dublin, Stockholm and Milan currently fall within the net, served by carriers such as Air UK and Cityjet. Those still to be snared include Copenhagen, Hamburg, Madrid and Barcelona. UK destinations yet to be served include Glasgow, Manchester and Belfast.

London City is becoming a viable alternative to Heathrow for executives within the appropriate catchment area. Those who live in central London, and around the eastern side of the M25, will find it appropriate to their needs. It certainly has the edge on Heathrow in terms of service. Passengers can turn up ten minutes before departure, and speed on their way, fog and other natural hazards permitting. As Gooding says: "At Heathrow, you can walk for 20 minutes before you've even got into the main terminal, never mind the traumas of parking."

"Heathrow is a super airport, because it

has such a choice of flights and such high frequencies. All the airlines in the world want to be there, and it's natural that passengers will want to be where most of the well-known airlines are. But I think it is getting zoo-like. In some ways, that congestion factor at Heathrow is our biggest strength."

In many ways, Gooding's goals are not particularly ambitious. London City deals with 20,000 passengers a week; doubling the numbers would threaten congestion and delays – all the things it is seeking to avoid. Only about 15 per cent of air travellers in London and the South East fall into the premium traveller bracket. Gooding will be happy to capture about 1½ per cent of that. As he says: "The aviation business isn't just about volume of passengers. It's about yield: how much can you earn from each of these passengers?"

The refurbishment is an important part of the equation. "Much of people's perceptions of the business are of what it looks like. Is it clean and tidy? Does it look bright and polished? Or is it starting to look slightly tarnished? These make a real impression on people." The terminal and lounges are a prime focus. "The airport building is now ten years old. You're starting to see the cracks."

Gooding is keen to smarten up the airport car park, putting in a covered walkway and improving security. Most of the interest is likely to centre on the hotel scheme – a rare enough spectacle in amenity-starved Docklands. He foresees a complex that will blend in with the terminal and straddle the airport drop-off zone. "A lot of people like to use the facilities of a hotel, even for a few hours. You could check out of the hotel and check in for your flight all in the same transaction. You just walk through and get on to the aeroplane."

Having Desmond on the scene has helped to make such initiatives possible. "While we're not hugely profitable, we're no longer losing the disgusting sums of money that were being lost in earlier years. We can start to turn our eyes to the sort of issues which would have been seen as *bit more trivial* in years before."

The promise of increased jobs can only go down well in a borough with higher than average unemployment. London City provides work for 600 people, sub-contractors and other staff included. "Ten years ago, here in the Royal Docks, not one of those jobs existed. There's never been a penny of public money in the airport, yet from nothing, 600 well-paid permanent jobs have been created. In terms of economic regeneration, it's something we have to be proud of."

"While we need highly skilled jobs at one end of the spectrum, we also want cooks, and gardeners, and waiters, and waitresses, and retail people, and baggage handlers and firemen. The whole panoply of what used to be called working-class jobs. That's what airports are good at providing."

It all bodes well. "Having gone from a small, quiet, backwater airport which was seen by many as a white elephant, the original rationale behind developing an inner-city airport in London's Docklands has come to fruition. We're now being seen by the experienced business traveller as a genuine alternative to Heathrow for short-haul flights to and from Europe."



Richard Gooding says London City airport is not yet hugely profitable, but it is no longer losing "disgusting sums"

MARTIN CURRIE



A red rag to a bull market?

The Chinese flag will soon replace the Union Jack in Hong Kong. But what will happen to the economic complexion of the colony? How will companies fare after the change-over? Will investors be seeing red? Martin Currie think not.

After all, Hong Kong companies have been investing in China for many years. And Chinese companies – the 'red chips' – are already listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange.

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TT 04

CHILDREN ASSETS
A dram of comfort in an exotic environment

Joanna Pitman discovers the Victorian garden at the Glen Grant distillery

Beside the clear waters of the Back Burn, and carefully hidden in a leafy corner, is a turf-roofed Dram Hut and whisky safe. The Victorian garden attached to the Glen Grant distillery at Rothes on Spey, Aberlour, has just been restored from bedraggled wilderness to idealised Scottish Highland landscape by its owners, the Chivas and Glenlivet Group.

The garden was designed by Major James Grant when he inherited the Glen Grant Pure Malt Scotch Whisky business in 1872. Its restoration has been shortlisted for this year's Civic Trust Landscape Award.

And whisky lovers will be tantalised by the reports of a rediscovery of the Dram Hut, Major Grant's private whisky safe that held stocks of the best pure malt. This has been re-equipped and made ready, one imagines, for directors of the group to indulge in a liquid equivalent of the Easter egg hunt. (Hints on its location may be divulged on special request.)

The garden restoration, carried out by a team of specialists led by Karen Ellington and with advice from the Scottish Conservation Projects Trust, has also provided a fascinating picture of Scottish horticultural history.

Major Grant was a pioneering businessman, a renowned sportsman and an intrepid traveller who undertook every project on a grand scale. He chose the 27-acre site taking advantage of the

landscape's natural features and dramatic setting and created rustic bridges across the burn and waterside paths to meander through the orchards and wooded glades.

An army of gardeners cleared the lower reaches of the glen and laid stone and pottery drains.

Conservatory

houses were built to house his collection of orchids and hothouse fruits. Special visitors were treated to melons, peaches and grapes before

enjoying a glass of Glen

Grant from the safe with cold water from the burn.

In its heyday, the garden

fully employed 11 gardeners, but after Major Grant's death, it fell into decline.

Harsh winters and the storm of 1953 took their toll.

The restorers spent three

full seasons bringing the

garden back to life with the

help of a few photographs

from the turn of the century.

They traced the original

winding pathways, removed

fallen timber, seeded trees,

rebuilt walls, restored

bridges and repaired ponds

and pathways. And as they

cleared the encroaching undergrowth, beautiful mature

orchards were discovered in

which most of the cherry and

apple trees had survived.

Banks of rhododendrons

and native ferns had also

survived as well as specimens

of early hybrids. The

ornamental areas have been

replanted with species from

America, China and the Hi-

malayas according to period

garden catalogues. And the

water features, a passion of

Victorian gardeners, have

been revived, the lily pond

being refined using the tradi-

tional method of clay pud-

dling and the bog garden

replanted with iris and lilac

on its banks.

Exotic plants from distant

parts were highly fashion-

able in the late 19th century

and determined specimen

collectors developed special

cases to carry back samples.

Major Grant created

garden environments to ac-

commodate a wide variety of

exotica, including a large

rhubarb-like marshland

plant from Brazil, samples of

Himalayan birch and the

Chinese primula.

The restoration of the Glen

Grant garden to its idealised

Highland landscape has

provided an extraordinary

living museum of Scotland's

late 19th-century gardening

heritage. And visitors will no

doubt appreciate its year-

round glories all the more if

they are fortunate enough to

discover the hidden Dram

Hut.

Wilderness tamed: the restored garden of James Grant

STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Glaxo and Zeneca move in opposite directions



Shares in Railtrack rose 23½p on institutional buying

THE sight of shares in Glaxo Wellcome and Zeneca, two of Britain's biggest drug manufacturers, travelling in opposite directions, set tongues wagging in the Square Mile.

Glaxo Wellcome ended the day 2½p lower at £10.15½, after briefly touching £10.12½, on turnover of more than six million shares. At the same time, shares of Zeneca were heading north with a leap of 78p to a new all-time high of £18.95½.

At this level Zeneca carries a price tag of £1.2 billion, but remains more than half the size of Glaxo Wellcome, capitalised at almost £37 billion.

Zeneca has been the subject of intense takeover talk ever since it was demerged from ICI in 1993. Roche, the Swiss pharmaceutical group, was the name on everyone's lips a few weeks ago and in the past it has also been linked with Pfizer in the US.

A bid by Glaxo Wellcome is usually dismissed by brokers on regulatory grounds. Most of them say such a move would be immediately referred, but they also said that when Glaxo bid £10 billion for Wellcome in 1994.

Last night there were whispers about a possible link-up between the two sides. But as one market-maker commented: "These sort of price movements usually attract the attention of the Takeover Panel".

The rest of the equity market had the look of the day after the night before about it. Indeed, a lot of analysis failed to make it to their desks after the annual Society of Investment Analysts' dinner at the Grosvenor Hotel.

Nevertheless, the FT-SE 100 index was able to halve an earlier fall of almost 44 points prompted by the sharp fall in the Dow Jones average the previous evening. The expiry of the March options passed off without event.

The index closed 19.3 down at 4,336.8, a rise of 5.1 on the week. Turnover reflected the reduced attendance levels, with just 780 million shares traded.

Redland was a late casualty, falling 8½p to 338½p after losing its place as a constituent of the top 100 companies to Energy Group, which demerges from Hanson on Monday. Trading on the grey market, ahead of the start of official dealings on Monday,

Energy slipped 1½p to 525p. Hanson was 1½p down at 57½p, while the rump of the business, made up of building products, was 6p down at 287½p.

BOC Group reported a rise of 34½p to 994p cheered by positive comments from several brokers. NatWest Securities has raised its forecast after further consideration of the

trading results. Reporting are Standard Chartered, 16p off at 793p, National Westminster, 1½p lower at 812p, and Abbey National, 6½p cheaper at 277½p.

Shield Diagnostics rounded off a profitable week for shareholders with another leap of 113p to close at a new peak of 529½p. It stretches the gain during the past five days

finished the week on a high note with a rise of 17p to a new high of 74½p as investors continued to reflect on prospects for its process for diagnosing BSE in cattle. Some estimate the European market, alone, could be worth £10 million.

Institutional investors continued to chase Railtrack to new heights with a rise of 23½p to 446p. Earlier this week the group committed itself to spending £4 billion a year on the rail network and promised to reduce the debt in its current £750 million capital expenditure programme.

Chelsea Village, owner of the west London Premiership side, rose 6½p to 161½p in spite of plunging into the red during the first six months.

The final result exceeded expectations and was achieved despite crowd capacity being sharply reduced due to construction of a new stand.

Ashurst Technology was 20p better at 80p with the market continuing to assess prospects after its link-up with Eastern Sports in the US to make baseball and softball bats.

Hopes that Granada will use the proceeds from the sale of its Wellcome Break chain of service stations to bid for the remainder of Yorkshire Tyre Tires Television lifted the latter 42½p to £12.15. Granada already owns 25 per cent of Yorkshire.

First Call rose 2½p to 11p on news it was in talks which could lead to it making a significant acquisition. The announcement was prompted by the rise in the share price.

□ **GILT-EDGED:** Unimpressed with the revised fourth-quarter gross domestic product, bond prices were dragged lower along with US Treasury bonds.

Investors seemed unwilling to test the market by opening fresh positions ahead of next week's auction.

The March series of the long gilt finished £16 lower at £113½, as almost 50,000 contracts were completed.

Treasury 8 per cent 2005 lost £1 to £107, while Treasury 8 per cent 2000 was unchanged at £104½.

□ **NEW YORK:** Share trading was volatile in morning trade as "double-witching" options took their toll on the Dow Jones industrial average.

By midday it was 16.62 points lower at 6,912.76.

Midday trading on the Nasdaq was 16.62 points lower at 1,619½.

□ **FT-SE:** Share trading was volatile in morning trade as "double-witching" options took their toll on the Dow Jones industrial average.

By midday it was 16.62 points lower at 6,912.76.

Closing Prices Page 45

□ **MOVES OF THE WEEK:**

Current Week's

Promutum Underwriting 1710 +14p Agreed bid from Wellington

Capital Corporation 1949 +23p London Clubs bids

Low & Bonar 4387½p +40½p Bumper profits news

Advances Power 480 +32p Profits warning

London Fortaking 4020 +43p Better than expected profits given go ahead

Proteus International 7430p +18½p BSE diagnosis given go ahead

Shield Diagnostics 3410 +113p BSE diagnosis given go ahead

Stobart Group 4460p +45½p £1.6 billion expenditure plan

BOC Group 894p +45½p Goldman Sachs says "buy"

Current Week's

ROBUST COFFEE 85 1567½p 1567½p

Mar 152½p 152½p 152½p 152½p

Jul 152½p 152½p 152½p 152½p

Sep 152½p 152½p 152½p 152½p

Oct 152½p 152½p 152½p 152½p

Volume: 512½

WHITE SUGAR (FOB)

Der 152½p 152½p 152½p 152½p

May 152½p 152½p 152½p 152½p

Aug 152½p 152½p 152½p 152½p

Oct 152½p 152½p 152½p 152½p

Volume: 80½

MEAT & LIVESTOCK COMMISSION

Animals (tonnes) per week re-enclosed

Markets by Friday 23

Fig Sheep Cattle

Ge 152½p 152½p 152½p 152½p

Jul 152½p 152½p 152½p 152½p

Aug 152½p 152½p 152½p 152½p

Sep 152½p 152½p 152½p 152½p

Oct 152½p 152½p 152½p 152½p

Volume: 80½

COMMODITIES

ICIS-LOR (London 6.00pm)

CRUDE OILS (£/bbl forward FOB)

Brent Physical 20.15 +0.55

Brent 5 May (May) 20.15 +0.55

WTI Intermediate (Apr) 21.50 +0.35

WTI Intermediate (May) 21.50 +0.35

PRODUCTS (£/MT)

Spot CIF NW Europe (prompt delivery)

Premium Unkd Bid Offer

Gas Oil 205 - 205 207 - 211

Osts



IN CONTROL 36

Turning up
the heat on
British GasWEEKEND
MONEY

ETHICAL STANCE 38

Increase your
wealth with a
clear conscience

THE TIMES: PERSONAL FINANCE NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR



Halifax unmoved by campaign

The Halifax Building Society is refusing to bow to pressure from MPs and consumer bodies to compensate elderly, widowed and disabled members who have been excluded from the share distribution because their accounts are run by trustees.

As the society's 8.5 million members prepare to vote at Monday's special general meeting on the plans to become a bank, pressure is growing for the society to use the occasion to commit itself to paying free shares directly to disabled members and others

whose savings are handled by trustees. The *Times* has been campaigning against societies that refuse to give free shares to such members in their own right. Societies argue that only the first named on the account is a member and that members can receive only one payout each.

This excludes thousands of disabled and elderly people who are unable to handle their financial affairs and whose accounts are held in the name of relatives, friends or professionals acting as trustees.

Douglas French, MP, said:

Mr French's Bill received an unopposed first reading in the Lords last Monday and will receive its second reading next Friday. If the Bill goes through unopposed, it could receive

SARA McCONNELL

sponsor of a Private Member's Bill which would force societies to include such disenfranchised people in their payout schemes, this week called on the Halifax to use Monday's meeting to make a "significant gesture and promise to come forward with a formula to recognise the interests of people being left out".

Mr French's Bill received an unopposed first reading in the Lords last Monday and will receive its second reading next Friday. If the Bill goes through unopposed, it could receive

Royal Assent in early March. As it stands, the Bill is not retrospective. The Halifax and other societies, including the Woolwich and the Alliance & Leicester, would not be forced to include trustee-held accounts in bonus payouts.

However, Mr French believes the societies have an "enormous moral obligation" to do so. He said: "The Halifax has an untenable position to say its scheme is fair. It is clear what the wishes of Parliament and public are."

SARA McCONNELL

Banks build the bottom line

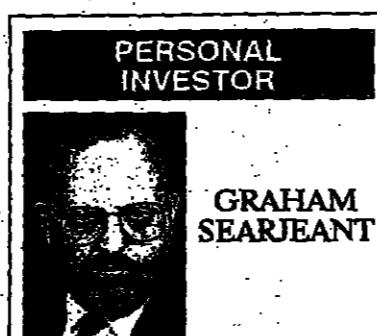
Traditionally, a pound managed by a great British bank was reckoned to be worth a fair bit less than the pound in your pocket. The skills of your friendly local bank manager devoured the assets he ran. Whereas most companies were valued by the stock market at more than their balance sheet worth, banks were priced at a discount.

There was, it turned out, a sound reason. In the 1970s and 1980s, banks showed an uncanny knack for losing money in large quantities. The more dynamic they became, the more spectacular the disasters for shareholders.

Few creatures are more dynamic than a lemming in full cry. Almost as one, banks successively rushed to lend on property, which crashed, to developing countries, which defaulted, on American oil and property, which dived, for small business expansion, which shrank rapidly in the 1990 slump, and for big developments that ran into trouble.

Profitable business was forever undermined by sometimes huge provisions against bad debts. Even some of their hefty dividends, the main solace for investors, were slashed. Midland, one of the worst hit, was finally taken over by Far East champion HSBC, to City relief. Banks were a laughing stock.

Not any more. For a while, banks have been disaster-free and underlying profits have grown again. Bank shares have been the darlings of the market, leading and outpacing the market averages. Over the past five years, the FTSE retail bank index has soared by nearly 300 per cent, against about 75 per cent for the all-share index. Powered

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SEARJEANT

more by profits than rerating, bank shares now typically trade at two to three times book value.

Can it last? It is hard to believe banks have given up old habits. But there are signs of fundamental change. Sir Brian Pitman, whose dedication to shareholder value paid big dividends at Lloyds, inspired a new generation of unsentimental bottom-line bank bosses. They drive to cut costs and cut again, to match low-cost building societies and Abbey National, which has made a successful transition to banking. Telephones, computers and cash machines enabled this cost revolution and bring new products.

If small customers quit in fury when they find their branch has closed, their bank manager has been fired along with the staff, or been replaced by a youthful salesman, and they can only communicate with a faulty computer with no memory, then too bad. New customers can be bought and the cost of servicing them cut in turn. It seems to work. Top

things can still go wrong. High profits invite competition, not least from converting building societies. Credit quality will deteriorate. Profit-taking on the Barclays results shows that a long bull market creates its own risks. The sector, though still not highly rated, is vulnerable to a market break. Soon, however, millions of people will become investors in new banks with new potential such as Halifax, Woolwich and Alliance & Leicester. They should not be in a hurry to sell. These now look the best way into the sector.

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Shock waves of strong sterling

Caroline Merrell looks at the rising pound's profound effect on all aspects of the economy

to ease inflationary pressures. Mr Turner said: "We are still looking for three increases in base rates bringing the total rise before the end of the year to 0.75 or 1 per cent."

Rises in the base rate will be

matched by rises in mortgage

and savings rates. A rise

in interest rates means that

foreigners will be more likely

to continue to invest in ster-

ling, thus keeping the pound

stronger.

As the company reporting

season begins, some, such as

Reuter's, the communications

group, are already blaming

disappointing figures on ster-

ling's strength. Volkswagen,

the German carmaker, gave

warning last week that it

would cease to buy British car

components if they continued

to get more expensive because

of sterling's inexorable rise.

Here *The Times* explains what

the long-term impact of the

strong pound will be.

■ Interest rates. The base

rate in the UK is one of the

highest among the developed

nations. Foreign investors,

such as the Americans, Japa-

nese and continental European

have rushed to invest in

sterling. The situation is un-

likely to change because these

countries do not appear likely

to increase rates enough to

attract back investors.

Despite pressure from the

Bank of England, Kenneth

Clarke, the Chancellor, is re-

fusing to raise the UK base

rate. However, many econo-

mists, including Chris Turner

at BZW, believe that interest

rates will have to go up to try

to ease inflationary pressures.

Mr Turner said: "We are still

looking for three increases in

base rates bringing the total

rise before the end of the year

to 0.75 or 1 per cent."

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Here *The Times* explains what

the long-term impact of the

strong pound will be.

M&G head of research, said:

"The problems caused by the

translation of overseas profits

into sterling may be matched

by companies borrowing over-

seas and paying off the interest

in pounds."

■ UK manufacturers. The

biggest victims of the rising

pound will be UK manufac-

turing companies, many of

which rely on export sales for a

large part of their profits.

Their goods will now be more

expensive than many of their

competitors' goods.

The damage will be slightly

mitigated by the fact that UK

companies will have to pay

less for their raw materials.

However, Mr Hatherly said:

"Manufacturing companies in

Germany did well despite the

rise of the mark against the

other currencies ... German

companies managed to be-

come very much more effi-

cient. In the UK, manufac-

turers will have to go through

a period of painful adjust-

ment."

■ Unit and investment trusts.

At the end of last year many

of the returns made on rising

world markets by those with

internationally invested unit

trusts, personal equity plans

and investment trusts were

wiped out by the currency

movements.

Mr Hatherly said: "Many

fund managers have in the

past relied on a devaluing

pound to boost returns from

overseas investments. They

will now have to pay much

more attention to the underly-

ing stock." Mr Hatherly said

he advised investors who were

concerned about currency risk

to keep their investments re-

stricted to the UK.

■ Gift-edged stocks. Some

investment managers believe

that gilts are a particularly

good buy at the moment. Ten-

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The performance of the FTSE® 100 Index over five years on 27 December 1996 is calculated on an offer to bid basis including all dividends net of tax. The performance is based on the average of all Totex available for the whole period. Source: HSBC.

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- Access to your investment at all times
- There is no initial charge and no exit charge to pay
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- Offer closes 27th March 1997

Better deals emerge to encourage loyalty, says Caroline Merrell

A little extra incentive for Halifax borrowers

The Halifax, the United Kingdom's biggest lender with 19 per cent of the mortgage market, this week launched two schemes aimed at keeping its customers loyal.

The first initiative cuts more than 1 per cent off its range of fixed-rate loans, while the second offers a cashback of up to £10,000 spread over three years. The Halifax is now offering a five-year fixed-rate loan, with an interest rate set at 7.65 per cent. Previously the rate was 8.45 per cent. Its three-year fixed rates have a rate of 6.9 per cent, against 7.85 per cent previously, while its two-year fixed rate is 6.45 per cent, against 7.25 per cent.

The Christmas cashback scheme will pay borrowers a sum equal to 1 per cent of the outstanding loan, on December 1, for three years. Borrowers will also get a 1 per cent cashback when they take out the mortgage.

This aggressive move is seen by some as an attempt by the Halifax to maintain market share. Its 2.1 million borrowers have been effectively locked in since it announced in 1994 that it planned to merge with the Leeds and float on the stock market. Borrowers have been unable to move their loans — doing so would jeopardise their allocation of shares, expected to be worth around £840.

Elsewhere, mortgage brokers are reporting an increase in business as three to four years of pent-up demand for property is released. Brokers are claiming an increase in demand for



Years of pent-up demand for property is being released

100 per cent mortgages despite the problems experienced by those buying houses without a deposit at the end of the Eighties. It was this category of borrowers that experienced the greatest difficulty during the recession.

However, those in the mortgage market consider that lenders to these borrowers have learnt how to underwrite the loans with a little more care. Ian Darby, marketing director at John Charcol, the mortgage broker, said: "In reality, underwriting a 100 per cent loan is very similar to underwriting a 90 to 95 per cent loan."

He said it was easier for those with no deposit to try to borrow the entire value of their property, rather than using credit cards and personal loans to fund a deposit. He said: "Borrowing at 7.24

per cent or the average mortgage rate is much better than trying to take out a bank loan where the rates will be much higher."

Mr Darby said that he was also experiencing a rise in demand for fixed-rate loans. Of the Halifax move, he said: "I reckon the Halifax needed to cut their fixed rates because they were way out of line with the market."

Potential borrowers are being drawn to fixed-rate loans because of the security they provide. Many brokers believe that interest rates are almost sure to rise despite Kenneth Clarke's refusal to cave in to pressure from the Bank of England. Among the fixed rates recommended by John Charcol is a five-year 7.45 per cent rate from the Leeds & Holbeck, and a two-year 5.29 per cent mortgage from the Skipton.

Mr Darby and other mortgage brokers gave warning that borrowers should make sure that they understand the redemption penalties that apply to fixed-rate loans.

David Duncan, director of residential mortgages at Chase de Vere, said: "I would ask anyone planning to take out a fixed rate to make sure that they understand the redemption penalties. Many lenders are now expressing redemption penalties as a percentage of the loan rather than as a few months' interest."

Expressing penalties as a percentage of the loan could lead some borrowers into believing that they face paying less if they redeem their loan than they would in schemes where redemptions are expressed in terms of monthly interest.

Mr Darby also gave warning against some of the deeply discounted mortgages which were in vogue a few months ago — mortgages as low as 1 per cent were being offered.

One of the conditions of many discounted loans is that the borrower must move to the variable rate as soon as the discount ends, which in some cases could double the mortgage payments overnight.

Best buys, page 42

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Beware the supermarket loss leader

Sainsbury's. Even its name sounds downbeat, as tired as its stores. In the dreary aisles and the populous queues of my local branch, I seldom feel more like singing the blues.

The supermarket is now hoping to regain its place in the nation's affections by diversifying into banking. The move suggests that Sainsbury's may, after all, be capable of copying the successful innovations of others.

As Delia Smith could tell you, there is much to be gained by following a tried and tested recipe. The highly efficient First Direct, created by the Midland, has obviously served as one model for the Sainsbury's bank.

Sainsbury's has begun well by offering a highly competitive 3.75 per cent rate on balances of as little as £1. Small savers could earn a better return only by taking a risk with their money. These customers have largely



ANNE ASHWORTH
Personal Finance Editor

been forgotten by the building societies who prefer investors with larger sums. Anyone now aspiring to open an account with £100 is seen only as a speculator, hoping to benefit from a future conversion.

The generous interest rate should also ensure that Sainsbury's wins a significant number of new savers when Halifax and the other societies becoming banks distribute their windfalls in the summer.

Savers who have been locked into low-paying accounts will be anxious

to find a new home for their cash. The Abbey National has already declared its intention to win as much of this money as possible. Another rival should act in the most satisfactory way to increase rates all round.

Customers, however, should not be overwhelmed by Sainsbury's generosity. Its savings account is a loss leader. If you sign up with the supermarket, it may attempt to encourage you to fill your trolley with other financial products but you would be best advised to shop around.

A proposal to buy insurance to ring-fence assets is expected, says Marianne Curphey

A new look at long-term care

Tens of thousands of elderly people who could need nursing home care in the final years will learn within weeks how the Government expects them to pay for it.

Although the long-awaited draft Bill on long-term care is due to be published soon, there will be a consultation period for insurers and charities, and ministers admit it is unlikely to become law before the general election.

That leaves many about to enter private nursing homes confused and anxious. It also means that those who are ill and may need nursing be-

tween now and the summer face a dilemma.

The draft Bill is expected to propose a partnership scheme whereby an individual may buy an insurance policy to ring-fence their assets and prevent a proportion of them being used to pay for care.

The working details have not yet been released, but they are expected to suggest that for every £1 worth of insurance taken out, the Government will "disregard" between £1.50 and £2 of assets.

In Britain, single pensioners with assets of between £10,000 and £16,000 now have to contribute towards a propor-

tion of the cost of nursing care, while those with more than £16,000, including their homes, have to meet the full bill. These regulations have been criticised for penalising pensioners who save.

Under new proposals expected, if a person bought insurance worth £40,000, then together with the £16,000 "disregarded" for single pensioners, the State would allow assets worth between £56,000 and £96,000 to be left free for inheritance, before it claimed any surplus to cover long-term care costs.

Age Concern England said that it was concerned that the long-

proposals would benefit a very small number of people who could afford to pay for such insurance. "We would like to see all political parties making a commitment to providing free nursing care to everyone."

The Continuing Care Conference, which represents charities, care providers, local authorities, financial product providers and consumer organisations, called on all the political parties to give the issue top priority during the election campaign.

It says it is concerned that none of the parties has presented comprehensive proposals that deal with the long-

term and the immediate problems facing large numbers of older people. About 160,000 older people go into nursing or residential homes each year and 40,000 people are forced to sell their homes to meet long-term care costs.

Frank Field, Labour MP and chairman of the Social Security Select Committee, proposes that people should buy insurance to cover the risk of needing professional care at the end of their lives. Everyone would pay 3 per cent of their income towards this, and payments would be triggered when the person qualified for help for medical reasons.



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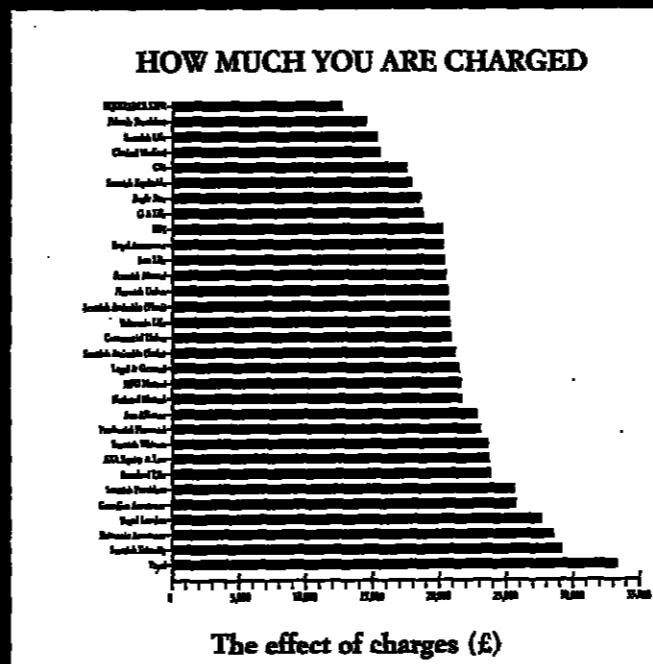
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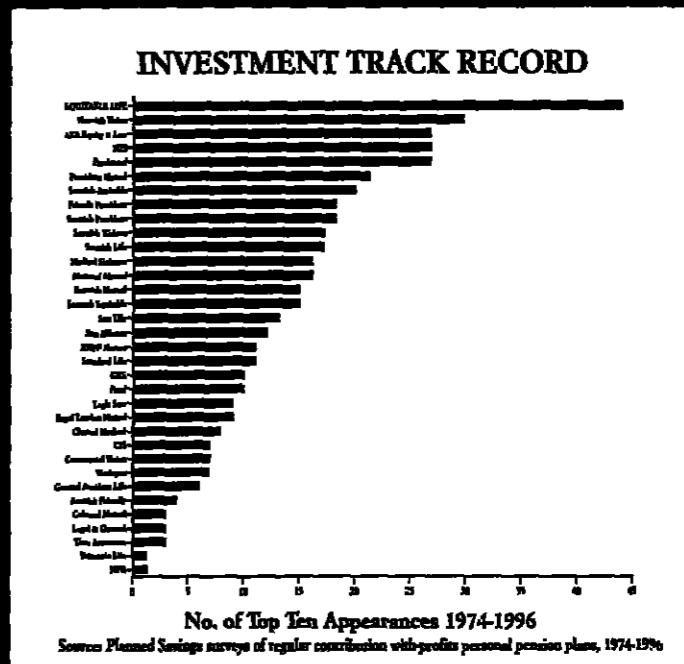
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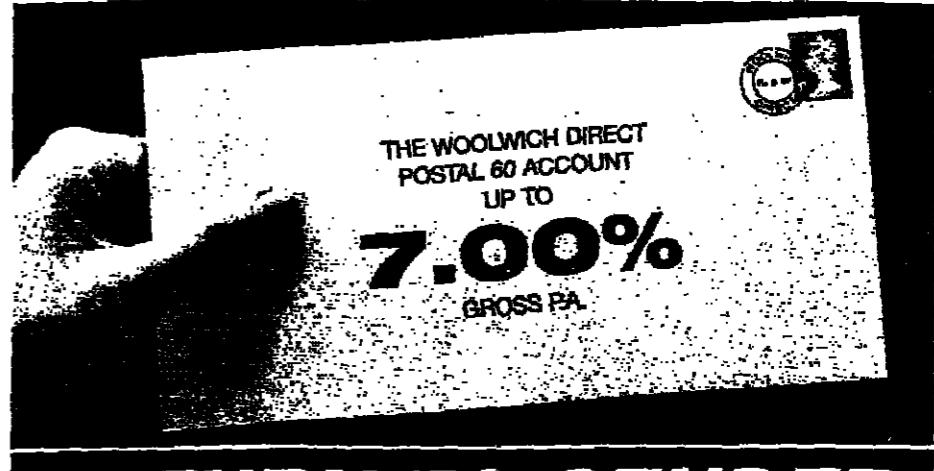
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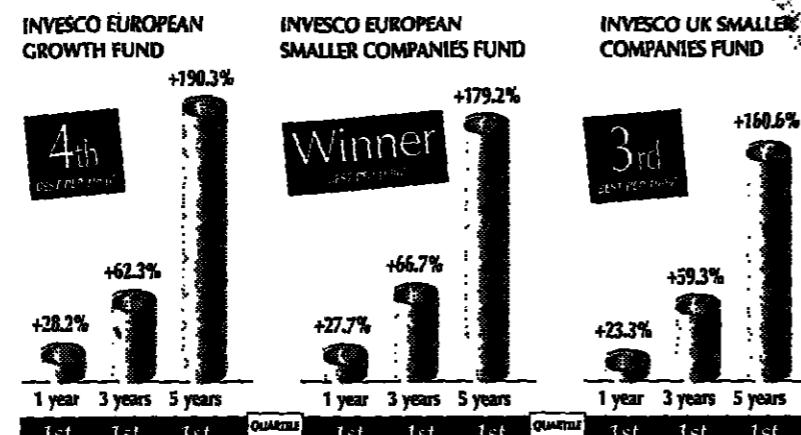
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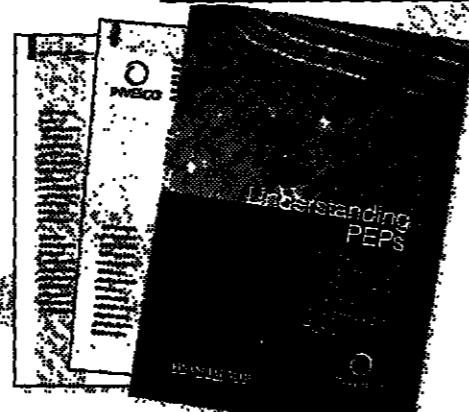


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TT22/2/97

Homeowners caught by development plans

Property blight
is affecting
more and more
people, reports
Sara McConnell



Doomed: Catherine Lane in the grounds of her home, Hill House, a Grade II listed property that will be demolished to make way for the second runway at Manchester airport

Homeowners near the path of the proposed second runway at Manchester airport this week vowed to fight on against the expansion, which they say has blighted their properties for the past six years and trapped them in homes which they cannot sell. In some cases the value of homes has dropped by more than half, they claim.

Hundreds of thousands of homeowners across the country are similarly affected by road schemes, rail routes and other big public projects involving environmental upheaval for years or even decades. Even those who qualify for compensation face years of waiting with no prospect of claiming until a scheme has been up and running for a year.

The rules governing compensation were last year attacked as inadequate by the Select Committee on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. A government working group is reviewing payments to homeowners and is expected to report "shortly". The Halifax Building Society confirmed that it was compiling a report on property prices in blighted areas.

Janet Armstrong-Fox, a solicitor and member of the planning and environmental law

group of Collyer-Bristow, a firm of solicitors, said: "This review is years overdue. For too long homeowners who find themselves in the locality of a popular scheme have had no alternative but to brace themselves for years of uncertainty with no guarantees of adequate compensation for either their financial loss or the misery they will invariably suffer."

Campaigners against the second runway at Manchester airport this week started a legal challenge to the Government's decision last month to approve the plans after an eight-month

public inquiry. Barry Hepburn, co-ordinator of the Manchester Airport Joint Action Group, is leading the challenge. He said the group was "bundled up to fight on". Some homeowners had seen the value of their homes drop by more than £100,000. He said: "People close to the second runway are finding their homes virtually unsaleable."

However, a successful challenge would mean further uncertainty, particularly for the residents of the worst-affected areas, which include Mobberley and Knutsford. Rick Dallimore, a partner in Meller Braggins, a Knutsford estate agents, said: "The new runway will end in the centre of Mobberley, which is causing problems. We have houses for sale which don't sell, or at least not at an acceptable price. The airport has bought a lot of properties off people, but we are left with the people whose homes adjoin the runway."

One Mobberley resident, Martin Bridgford, has been trying to sell his five-bedroom

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Martin Waller concludes his five-part series on investing

Bid battles explained

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE STOCK MARKET



You are nearly there. There are just a few odd points you need to know, starting with what happens when one company bids for another.

Takeover bids

Our lives are crammed with decisions. Some we take immediately, others we have a few days to mull over. Few of us have two whole months to decide even the most serious.

Peculiarly, this is how long you get to decide whether or not to sell your shares to a company that may want to buy them. The mechanics of the bid are thus. Company A says it wants to buy company B. It names a price it is prepared to pay for each share — generally well above that share's previous price, unless the bid is widely expected.

The offer may be straight cash, a mixture of cash and new shares or loans to be issued by company A. Another type of offer, although rare, is one entirely of new shares. If the offer includes shares, there will generally be a full cash alternative pitched slightly below the value of the share offer.

If you have shares in company B, you must decide if the of-

fer fully values them. Consult a financial adviser or the press, and remember the first rule never hurry. If the offer is agreed by company A immediately, a joint announcement is made that a deal has been done.

If it is contested, the board of company B will generally advise its shareholders to take no action. Follow this advice: most contested bids have to be raised to be successful, and first offers are often just sighting shots. But if you accept the first offer and it is later raised, you get the higher amount anyway.

Once a formal document is issued, the takeover has 60 days to be resolved. Although most companies' shares are owned by big City institutions, small shareholders are of some importance. The bidder must gain the assent of more than 50 per cent of the shares issued. Bids are to be successful, and first offers are often just sighting shots. But if you accept the first offer and it is later raised, you get the higher amount anyway.

Whatever the structure, they are supposed to operate separately. If a merchant bank learns that its client, company A, is to bid for company B tomorrow and the shares can be ex-

pected to rise, it is clearly unacceptable for a banker to tell the brokers to buy the shares now.

The two businesses are under one roof, but are said to be separated by a Chinese Wall. I said "supposed". Actions such as the purchase I just described are not unknown, and are an example of insider trading and illegal, as would be the purchase of shares in company B by a company A employee who knew about the bid beforehand. But all this does happen — it is not unusual for shares in a company to rocket before a bid is announced. Clearly, somebody knew and dealt in the shares. But there are few successful prosecutions.

The players

City operators today may be conglomerates, huge financial institutions that might house merchant banks advising companies on finance and City business, such as takeovers and broking businesses that buy

the main body of traded shares. Created in June 1995, it is relatively new, as are most of the companies quoted on it. They are, by definition, risky investments. Any money invested in AIM stock should be regarded similarly to visiting a racetrack. You could lose the lot.

TAX

Dividends are paid net of tax, which is paid in advance by the company. This absolves most investors from having to pay tax up to the standard rate. If you pay higher-rate tax, you must make up the difference. If you pay no tax, you can reclaim it.

So there you are. I have covered the basics of what every shareholder should know. The most important quality for any investor is caution. Not everyone in the City is a crook, an Arthur Daley or a con-man. But some are.

Regard anyone approaching you with an investment opportunity as you would a second-hand car dealer. Plenty of those are honest, too, and there are perfectly good cars on their forecourts. But there are two sides to every share purchase. If the shares you are being urged to buy are such a good deal, why is the other side so keen to sell? Happy investing.

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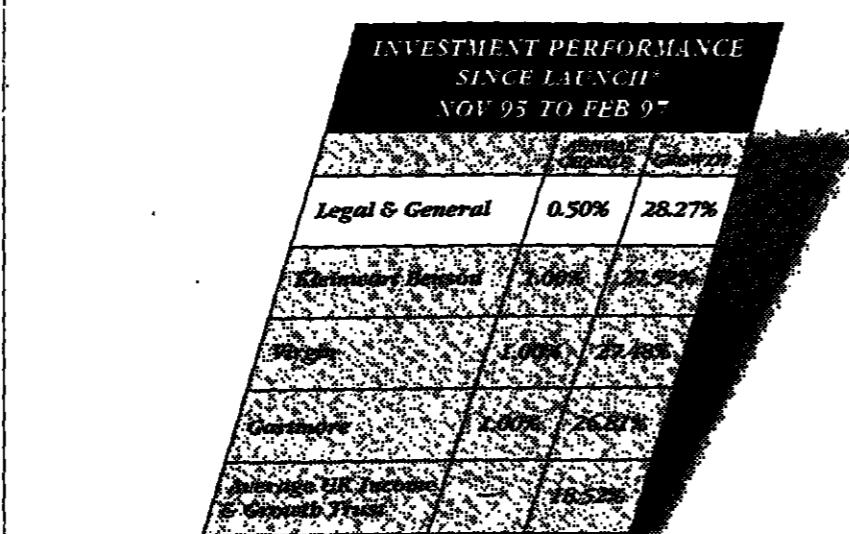
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and James Kitchenham meets a man who brought gas contracts down to earth

Gas is no laughing matter

John Freake, a retired oil company geologist from Sussex, failed to see the funny side of British Gas's fixed-price "take-or-pay" contracts fiasco for which it exacted its customers to pay.

So he was delighted when Kent and Sussex were chosen as early areas for competitive gas supply distributors under the deregulation of the industry. But then his problems started.

"I wanted to do an analysis of the different packages offered by the competing companies, but some of them were coy to the point of secrecy about what they were offering and it was almost impossible to get information from some companies."

"I originally contacted Ofgas, the regulator, to get the names of the companies and then began telephoning them. Some of them took three or four calls to get a response and some still had not sent their information and contracts a month after I originally contacted them. It seemed a strange way to win customers."

Having had considerable experience of constructing and using databases in the oil industry, when he had most of the information from the competing companies to hand, he set up a database on his home computer.

His intention was to make an analysis to find the best supplier on the basis of tariff price, standing charge and method of payment.

He decided to exclude appliance maintenance costs as

he feels it is cheaper to use an independent engineer than to have a British Gas or similar service contract.

Likewise he dismissed store voucher offers and other tiny inducements as "an irrelevance". But again he hit problems trying to compare like-with-like for each company against his present British Gas contract.

"One company did not give details of its discount at all. It simply had a box to tick on the contract if you were interested in a discount. I rang up to find out about the further discount and no one could tell me anything about it."

Eventually, of the 11 companies on whose figures he could do a reasonable analysis, Mr Freake found that Scottish Power and SWEBGas gave the greatest savings over British Gas at 27 per cent and 23.74 per cent respectively.

This was calculated using the cheapest option available — a monthly direct debit secured a 4 per cent discount, or a lower tariff rate. Most contracts are rolling ones and companies offer fixed terms.

He concluded: "Some of these offers are not as transparent as they could be. I think Ofgas could have insisted that contracts were offered on a standardised basis so that consumers could make easy direct comparisons between companies. Whichever company you choose, do read the supply contract carefully."



John Freake set up his own database to try to make sense of competing gas contracts

HOW THE COMPETITORS COMPARE WITH BRITISH GAS			
Company name	Saving (%)	Tariff per kWh/hour	Standing charge per year
Scottish Power	27	1.085	£36.46
SWEBGas	23.74	1.177	£0.00
British Gas	20.49	1.25	£0.00
Southern Electric	20.33	1.20	£30.60
Eastern Natural Gas	19.52	1.212	£31.02
Texaco & Calor Gas	19.06	1.254	£39.95
Amerada	17.84	1.214	£47.00
Northumbrian	16.69	1.26	£28.98
London Total Energy	14.12	1.3	£29.20
Beacon Gas	11.92	1.36	£26.00
British Gas Trading	0	1.52	£38.34

Centrica moves dynamically — down

About £250,000 was spent by British Gas last year on a rebranding exercise for the two companies that were to emerge from its planned demerger. The sum bought two logos and two names — BG and Centrica. The provenance of the former is easy to guess; the latter, though, was dreamt up to signify "quickly moving and dynamic". The appropriateness of the rebranding was felt by former British Gas shareholders this week as the shares of the newly demerged Centrica move quickly and dynamically down.

British Gas assets are now divided into BG plc, the gas supply and pipeline business, and Centrica, the retail side. Centrica is also laden with the "take or pay" contracts and the Morecambe Bay gas field. These two factors continue to cast a shadow over the future perfor-

mance of the company, as analysts in the gas market are not entirely clear what their impact will be. On the first day of trading, a total of 54.5 million Centrica shares changed hands and the price fell by 13.5 per cent to 65.4p while 20 million BG shares changed hands lifting the price by 2.5p to 174.2p.

Yesterday the shares were 68.4p and 175.2p, respectively. This compares with the share price of the merged British Gas, at the end of last week, of 247.2p. This represents a net loss to the estimated 1.7 million small shareholders in British Gas. Sids: 1 per cent.

The price of Centrica was not helped by a pronouncement from Merrill Lynch, the broker, that the shares could be worth as little as 40p, though a trad-

ing range of 40p to 80p is expected. Many financial advisers advise clients to sell Centrica. The stock may be very volatile and no dividend is likely in the foreseeable future. Mathew Orr, of Kilik & Co, the broker, said: "This is not the type of company many small investors thought they were buying when they invested in British Gas." BG plc, the biggest part of the company, currently yields 7.1 per cent, high in comparison with other utilities. Some advisers advocate holding BG shares for the dividend alone. But these may be cut in future, as it is being examined by Clare Spottiswoode, the gas regulator, who wants greater competition. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission is also looking at pricing issues.

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Gavin Lumsden on how to increase wealth with a clear conscience

Etches have come out of the theology class and into the real world. Everyone, it seems, wants a piece of the action. Swampy, the anti-roads protester, has captured the nation's heart with his burrowing antics in Devon. Meanwhile, Diana, Princess of Wales, continues to command public respect with her campaign against Britain's export of landmines. Increasingly, investors, too, are demanding that their money is used ethically. In addition to growing their wealth, they want to do some good in the world in the process. For many this means saying no to companies that harm the environment or contribute to the global war machine, including the manufacture of armaments and landmines.

Fortunately, there are up to 20 ethical and ecological unit trusts which have developed a decent track record in this kind of caring investment. These include Abstrakt Ethical, Clerical Medical Evergreen and Eagle Star Environmental Opportunities. Most are available as PEPs, which means that you can enjoy tax-free growth as well as a clear conscience.

Ethical unit trusts use a combination of negative criteria to screen out unsuitable stocks. All of them, for instance, avoid companies making the bulk of their profits from tobacco, alcohol and pornography, reflecting the religious origins of ethical investment. To this must add environmental concerns to their list, frequently banning investments in nuclear energy. Animal testing and oppressive regimes are also blacklisted.

CIS, the Co-op's insurance arm, runs one of the biggest ethical unit trusts. It finds that people often invest in CIS Environ on behalf of their children.

David Mott, CIS spokesman, said: "There is a 'feel-good' factor to investing in ethical funds. Many people say they want to invest in their children's future financially, but then ask themselves what kind of world are they going

Investors in search of a piece of the ethical action

JOHN STELLWELL



Diana, Princess of Wales, has pricked the public conscience

to be living in? Ethical investment works on both fronts, providing a good return and attempting to solve some of the problems we have today."

As a result of this pressure, funds such as Friends Provident, Stewardship, Jupiter Ecology, NPI Global Care and Credit Suisse Fellowship are going out of their way to promote ethical businesses.

These funds use positive criteria to select companies in conservation, pollution control and the manufacture of safety equipment, for instance.

Employment conditions are also on the agenda for Stephanie Howard, fund manager of the Credit Suisse fund. "We

also look for companies with a sympathetic approach to their employees, and particularly how they fit in with the local community," she said. "Many of our investments are in small companies with high research-and-development budgets. Often they are the biggest employer in the area."

This approach works well with small companies but can be problematic with larger organisations, which can have 'unethical' operations alongside more 'worthy' sides of the business.

For instance, few ethical funds would invest in large pharmaceutical companies which test products on ani-

males, but they may happily focus on smaller biotechnology companies. On average, ethical funds are invested in only 30 per cent of companies on the FT-SE 100 index.

Alan Perkins, fund manager of Family Assurance's United Charities Ethical Fund, which has just been Pepped, says new issues and demergers are hard work for the ethical manager, who has to examine the company thoroughly before it lists.

Because of the complexity, ethical funds turn to organisations such as the Ethical Investment Research Service (Eiris) in London and the Manchester Business School to help them to compile a list of eligible investments.

These organisations regularly survey companies' attitudes and business practices. If you are interested in ethical investment Eiris also provides a list of independent financial advisers who specialise in the ethical arena. Further information is available from Eiris on 0171-735 1351.

However, all this research does result in extra charges. Although NPI and Jupiter have cut initial charges to 4.5 per cent and 4 per cent respectively, the average for the sector remains 5 per cent, around 2 per cent higher than many conventional alternatives. Annual charges tend to be more than 1.5 per cent higher than the industry average.

Of course, as with all investments, performance not charges, is the key. Fortunately, ethical investors do not have to pay for their conscience. Over the past five years only Clerical Medical Evergreen has obviously underperformed its peers and the FT-SE 100. Funds such as Eagle Star Environmental Opportunities, Allchurches Amity and City Financial/Acorn Ethical have broadly matched the £1,675 return that a £1,000 investment on the FT-SE 100 index would have given you.

Top of the pile is Credit Suisse Fellowship, which grew an impressive 134 per cent, turning £1,000 into £2,339, closely followed by Framlington Health with a return of £2,222. The latter, however, is not strictly an ethical fund, although it bears all the hallmarks of one by focusing on the US biotechnology sector. Both funds also get high ratings from the Allenbridge Group, which judges funds on consistency as well as overall performance.

Holton Meahan, an IFA firm in London, publishes a free guide to ethical funds. Telephone 0171-404 6442.

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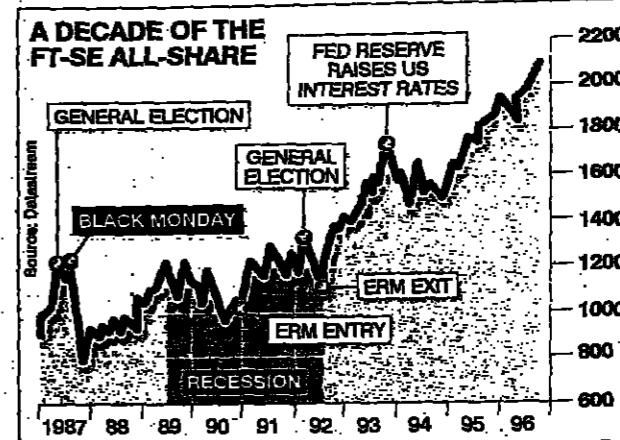
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Take a ten-year view when assessing funds, says Gavin Lumsden



Sitting pretty: you can make sure that your investments stay in good shape by holding regular "beauty parades"

Which is most trustworthy?



TRUST WATCH

For most first-time equity investors choosing pooled funds, such as unit trusts and investment trusts, investing in the UK is the natural step. But how have these funds performed in the long term?

Fund managers often quote their five-year performances, but ten-year periods are more useful because consistent performers are more likely to come out on top. A longer time period also enables you to judge how funds have coped with adverse market conditions as well as the good times.

A ten-year view also helps to put stock market falls into perspective, such as the 400-point drop in the FT-SE All-Share after Black Monday in October 1987. The wave of forced selling from distressed investors even forced some fund managers temporarily to suspend their unit trusts.

Since then the index has suffered three major falls as the economy struggled through a recession and reacted badly to the first increase in US interest rates in February 1994. Despite this the overall direction has been upwards, and in the past two years a bull run has taken it to record levels.

Propelled by this economic momentum, all but two of the 353 funds investing in the UK have made money for their holders over ten years. However, there is a wide disparity of returns and investors should review their funds regularly.

Fewer than half of the UK-focused unit trusts have a ten-year track record, demonstrating the frenetic pace at which investment funds have developed. Of the 305 that do, Newton Income has triumphed. Had you invested £1,000 in this fund in January 1987 and reinvested all the

income, you would have £4,814.12 today. By contrast, investors in Evermore Recovery would have only £1,242.86. Nevertheless, 283 unit trusts would have doubled your money.

However, only 10 per cent of these UK unit trusts actually beat the All-Share index in total returns.

According to Micropal, the statistics provider, the index would have turned the £1,000 into £3,267.53 over the past ten years, a feat which only 28 funds were able to beat.

Doesn't this illustrate the incompetence of fund managers in the City? Shouldn't we switch to tracker funds, which dispense with the stock-picking skills of fund managers by buying everything on the index? Not necessarily, says Chris Poll, head of Micropal. He points out that the index is only a guide and does not include the cost of dealing.

None of the unit trusts tracking the All-Share actually has a ten-year record, but if they did their returns would likely be much lower than the index. It is impossible for trackers to match the index precisely, and all have a small tracking error. More importantly, what trackers save on fund managers' wages they pay back in the increased expenses of dealing in every available stock.

The average unit trust charges investors 2.125 per cent and 1.5 per cent of their

holdings a year, which is equivalent to around 18 per cent over ten years. If you subtract this from the All-Share return you get less than £2,680. Using this figure the number of "successful" unit trusts quadruples to 120. This still leaves 185 funds in the dust.

Although investment trusts charge less in annual management fees, it is worthwhile comparing them against the figures for unit trusts. Overall, investment trusts provide higher returns but with higher risks. Some 15 of the 48 investment trusts investing in the UK with a ten-year track record returned more than £2,680, around three times the proportion of unit trusts, with 26 exceeding the costed All-Share figure. 34 more than doubled the £1,000 initial investment.

The top performer was Condover which returned £10,861.83 on the £1,000 investment. However, comparison with the All-Share is unfair as this is a high-risk venture capital fund investing in unlisted companies outside the index.

However, at the bottom of the table are the unfortunate capital shareholders of Jove, a split capital trust, who have seen their investment plummet to just £29.74.

Nigel Thomas, fund manager of the second-placed Pembroke Growth unit trust, says the search for portfolio diversity leads many managers to underperform the index. Many fund managers, like Mr Thomas, would be reluctant to hold BP and Shell together even if doing this reflected the make-up of the index.

Investors are paying fund managers to get their best hits. Jonathan Fry, investment director of Premier Fund Managers in Guildford, says it is no good letting them off the hook. He advises investors to copy the professionals.

He says: "Look at what the pension funds do, they hold triannual beauty parades and if the performance has not been up to scratch then change the manager or put him on 12 months' notice."

"That is what private investors have to do. Too many take their pension or choose a unit trust and never review how it is performing."

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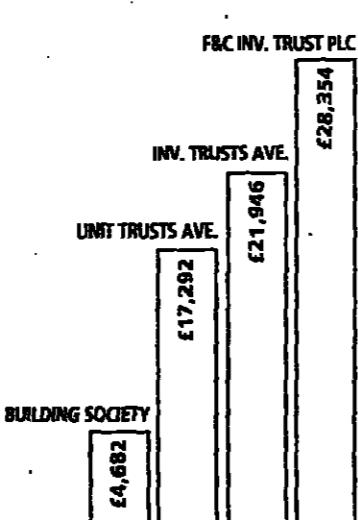
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HOW THEY PERFORMED

Fund	Return on £1000 offer to bid, net income reinvested	Rank
Unit trusts		
Newton Income	£4,814.12	1
Pembroke Growth	£3,267.53	2
Global High Equity Inc	£3,095.35	3
Pidelity Special Situations	£3,072.12	4
Credit Suisse Smaller Cos	£3,063.37	5
Building UK Smaller Cos	£1,588.89	301
Hambros Smaller Cos	£1,525.59	302
Alpha Fund	£1,508.23	303
Allied Dunbar Second Smaller Companies	£1,269.31	304
Evermore Recovery	£1,242.86	305
Investment trusts	yield to mid, net income reinvested	Rank
Condover	£10,861.83	1
Right & Issues - Income	£7,284.43	2
Right & Issues - Capital	£6,449.40	3
Winton Der Fund	£5,133.21	4
Value and Income	£4,621.34	5
Govt Strategic	£1,599.59	43
Friedmann Dual - Income	£1,514.89	44
Durham Income Fund	£1,507.14	45
FirstLife Income Fund	£1,492.72	46
Trust of Property Shares	£336.41	47
Jove - Capital (2004)	£299.74	48

Source: Micropal

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Karen Zagor on what investors should do when markets are high

Play safe for a steady income

Investors are warned regularly that trying to time stock market investments is a fool's game. After all, anyone who listened to the stock market bears and left their money in the building society last year would have missed out on one of the great bull runs of all time. But for many would-be investors, the rash of stock market record highs can lead to a real dilemma.

When markets are exceedingly high, there is a very real danger that they will plummet. Anyone able to take a 20-year view of the stock market should be able to ride out any storm, but investors near retirement do not have that luxury.

At the same, those near retirement may be most in need of a way of boosting their income, and equity investments are often the best way to supplement a pension and compensate for a lost salary.

Most advisers would agree

that anyone who cannot take a three-year or four-year view on their investment should steer clear of stocks. But even with markets at record levels, anyone who can take a longer-term view should probably have some equities in their portfolio.

Mark Bolland, of Chambéria de Broe, the independent financial adviser, says: "I am a bear, but it is riskier to be out of the market than in. The problem is, you could wait six months anticipating a crash and the market could hold its own."

"With the market so high, it makes sense to dribble your money in, either in monthly or quarterly instalments, and to make sure you have a good investment mix with some exposure to tracker funds, equity funds, individual stocks and preference shares to get the income you need. But you should always have a

chunk of cash on hand to help out if there is a market wobble."

How you structure your investments will depend largely on your income needs. If you have £250,000 to invest, perhaps from the sale of your family home, and you need an extra £500 a month, you could generate the income by leaving the money in the bank.

Other relatively safe income-generating options include gilts, which are currently yielding about 7.5 per cent and preference funds, which yield about 8.5 per cent to 9 per cent. But there will be some capital erosion with these investments, and the best place to compensate for that depreciation is in the stock market.

Jonathan Gumpel, of Brooks Macdonald Gayer, the independent financial adviser, says: "If you want complete security, I would advise stick-

ing the money in the building society. But for anyone who is 55 and looking for income over the next 20 years, I would probably advise being invested with a proportion of their funds perhaps set up as a quarterly savings plan to phase in the money."

"For people coming to us with cash, we would generally advise only being 45 per cent invested, then phasing in the other 55 per cent over a period of years. We would accelerate phasing the money in if there was a market fall."

Mr Gumpel believes that investment trusts are good value at the moment for investors looking for income because the prices already reflect concern about the high markets and a number of investment trusts are trading at a discount to their net assets.

He expects the discounts to narrow eventually, so investors should be able to profit from the narrowing, as well as receiving income from the investment.

"I would think a combination of UK high-interest funds such as Invesco Convertible, plus Scottish Mortgage for an element of growth and something like Murray International, which is wholly international, to take advantage of the strong pound at the moment would be a good mix," Mr Gumpel says.

Nervous income investors can take heart from the knowledge that, at a time of high markets, they are in a stronger position than those investing for capital growth.

With the recession behind us, we are not in a period where companies are cutting their dividends, so even if the market crashes there should be a continuing stream of income.

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RACING: THREE-STRONG CHALLENGE GIVES NICHOLSON POWERFUL HAND IN VALUABLE CHASE

Call It A Day to post Kempton success

BY RICHARD EVANS
RACING CORRESPONDENT

DAVID NICHOLSON can land the Racing Post Chase at Kempton this afternoon—but not with the horse he fancies most among his three runners in the £50,000-added race.

Nicholson believes Percy Smollett, runner-up behind Rough Quest 12 months ago, represents his best chance and he asked Adrian Maguire to ride the top weight in today's renewal. "I think Percy Smollett is the best I have ever had him and I asked Adrian to ride but he said he wanted to be on 'Call It A Day'. He loves him," Nicholson said yesterday.

To complicate matters further, King Lucifer, theoretically the third string from Jackdaws Castle, is arguably the form choice of the race.

RICHARD EVANS

Nap: CALL IT A DAY
(4.10 Kempton Park)
Next best Celibate
(3.50 Haydock Park)

judged on his excellent second behind General Command in the Great Yorkshire Chase.

However, I believe Maguire has made the right choice by selecting Call It A Day, a progressive seven-year-old who has never been out of the frame over fences. He was not far behind the best novices last term but began this campaign on a lenient handicap mark.

His defeat of Lord Gyllene at Uttoxeter, when he gave 16lb to the subsequent winner of three races, reads particularly well now. After a good post-freeze run in Ireland, when all Nicholson's runners were a gallop short, Call It A Day stepped up successfully in trip at Newbury 14 days ago and won well. He will not be inconvenienced by coming



Royallino leads Award over the last flight on his way to victory in the Bedfont Novices' Hurdle at Kempton Park yesterday

back to three miles, arguably his best distance, and runs off the same handicap mark.

An ability to handle all ground conditions, ranging from good to firm, could be vital. Percy Smollett, having his first run this term, definitely appreciates the mud. King Lucifer, outpaced at crucial times this season, may also need more demanding going. His two chasing victories last term came in moderate races and he may just lack the necessary class.

See More Business will have his supporters after twice finishing runner-up to Dorans Pride, a leading Cheltenham Gold Cup fancy. However, his jumping can be sketchy and since Don't Hesitate, who carried 9st 9lb to victory in 1977, Dextra Dove looks weighted up to his best while Encore Un Peu, without a win for two years, and Mudahim would appreciate further.

While Kempton's card should offer several Cheltenham

ham Festival clues, Haydock will provide useful Aintree pointers. The Greenalls Grand National Trial has attracted an excellent field but is a tricky race for punters with useful horses like Sun Bay and Buckboard Bounce returning after an absence.

Lo Stregone runs off the same mark as when winning last year and, after excellent thirds behind Coome Hill in the Hennessy Gold Cup and Seven Towers, the subsequent Eider Chase winner, blinkers

have been refitted to Tom Tate's out-and-out stayer. He can oblige.

Away from the gaze of the television cameras, Nicholson can register a quick short-priced double with Sammartino and Viking Flagship (Kempton 1.55 and 2.25)

while the in-form Jimmy Fitzgerald could repeat the trick at Doncaster with Cover Point (4.15) and Dual Image (4.45).

On the same card, John O'Shea has found an ideal opportunity for Bell Staffboy

(2.30) to complete a quick treble, while at Haydock, Celibate (3.50) can advertise his Arkle Challenge Trophy claims at the expense of Flying Instructor.

At Musselburgh, Shambough (3.10) should appreciate the drop in class after possibly needing the run when a disappointing favourite behind King Pin at Ayr last time. The in-form Monarque, a course-and-distance winner, can give weight away to his four rivals in the 3.45.

The Grey Monk favoured by return to shorter trip

HAYDOCK PARK
BBC1

1.15: In a tight juvenile handicap, the progressive Rossel makes some appeal. The winner of four races over hurdles for the in-form Peter Monro, the former Michael Stoute-trained gelding jumps particularly well. The form of his latest success has been boosted by the subsequent victories of Jackson Park, Double Agent and Cry Baby. Font Romeo, a rare 25-1 winner for Martin Pipe last time, looks to have plenty of weight and Meltemis is a bigger danger.

1.45: Provided his confidence has not been affected by a heavy fall in Ireland last time,



TODAY'S RACES ON TELEVISION

2.15: Despite being unbeaten over hurdles, Jujuah failed to impress at Sandown nine days ago when his jumping was far from fluent. Mistinguett is the clear form choice on her fourth to Make A Stand at Newbury 14 days ago and her course and distance success over Dato Star and Binsey last month. Moorish bounced back to form last Saturday at Folkestone is now looking a decent effort as fourth-placed Kings Witness won easily at Huntingdon on Thursday.

2.45: see above.

KEMPTON PARK

CHANNEL 4

3.00: The admirably game Stately Home and Greenback both like to force the pace so there will no hanging around. Although Land Afar is weighted to reverse Sandown form with Stately Home. Paul Webber's runner finds little off the bridle.

3.30: Fine Thyme has won all three chasing starts at Kempton and holds claims but Around The Gales is the choice. David Candolfo's well-regarded six-year-old jumps particularly well and has plenty of speed, so should be able to keep tabs on the front runners before pouncing in the straight.

3.35: Kerawi may have been slightly fortunate to beat White Sea at Newbury 15 days ago when Charlie Swan appeared to make an error of judgment on the runner-up. Nevertheless, that was a useful performance in a strongly-run race and he is the form choice. Whether he will reproduce that on this sharper track is questionable and Grief looks a viable each-way alternative.

His second behind Shadow Leader (winner since) in a fast-run novice hurdle at Folkestone is now looking a decent effort as fourth-placed Kings Witness won easily at Huntingdon on Thursday.

4.10: see above.

RICHARD EVANS

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4.10: see above.

4.40: Ocean Hawk's game defeat of Pleasure Shared at Haydock five weeks ago gives him a favourite's chance here with five runners out of the handicap and question marks against his main rivals.

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RUGBY UNION

Northern lights have perfect chance to shine

By DAVID HANDS, RUGBY CORRESPONDENT

THE Pilkington Cup has this season mirrored the FA Cup in that so many fancied teams have already left the scene. There is no Bath, no Wasps, no wealthy Richmond for the quarter-finalists to worry about this weekend; rather, the real possibility of northern clubs occupying two, or even three, of the places in the semi-final draw on Monday.

That situation has not occurred for 20 years. In 1977 Waterloo and Gosforth reached the knockout competition's penultimate stage, Fylde failing to join them. A year earlier, Gosforth, Sale and Wakefield made the last four and, coincidentally, all three are there again, even if traditionalists scoff at the thought that the Newcastle of today bears much relationship to the Gosforth of yesteryear.

Be that as it may, Newcastle have probably the best opportunity of carrying the northern banner a stage further, even though it is Leicester whom they must overcome. They are at home, they have 12 internationals from four countries available and they play a Leicester side weakened by the loss, through injury, of Eric Miller, Dean Richards and



Dawson: Lion-hearted

Wakefield keen to step forward

David Hands on the upwardly-mobile aspirations of one of Yorkshire's finest

YORKSHIRE is not short of upwardly-mobile rugby clubs. With the arrival of professionalism, the ambition burns among the likes of Leeds, Morley and Harrogate in the third division of the Courage Clubs Championship, and in the second division, where Rotherham and Wakefield sit cheek by jowl.

Rotherham have arrived only recently at this status; Wakefield, by contrast, seem to have been trying to escape it for years, yet seem doomed to failure once more this season with the moneyed clubs occupying both the promotion and the play-off spots.

There is, of course, still the cup. Wakefield stand on the threshold of repeating their feat of 1976, when they reached the semi-finals of the old John Player Cup. Today, they play Gloucester at College Grove in a Pilkington Cup quarter-final and, were they to win, it would be the most timely of victories.

Early next week, Wakefield plan to announce the first stage of a development essential if they are to fight their way into the English game's upper echelon. They have the opportunity to move to a new ground, away from the restricting and shared, confines of College Grove, with its 4,000 capacity, where they can grow and attract sponsorship.

That Wakefield have always been so competitive is remarkable, given their small catchment area of 65,000, and the competition for players. "There are many firms who would be prepared to invest in us if we were on our own," Robin Foster, their vice-chairman, said.

When the Rugby Football Union's (RFU) moratorium on professionalism ended last May, Wakefield handed out contracts to players. "We rushed into signing our squad because we were in danger of

losing a number to our wealthier brethren," Foster said. Like many others, they believed that revenue would become available from television and sponsorship deals – but, with the long-running dispute between the RFU and English Professional Rugby Union Clubs, it did not.

Wakefield's bacon was saved by the private investment of five former players, and though they lost three promising forwards to Leeds, they were able to attract three quality players from Orrell. "We haven't worked our tails off for the last 20 years just to slide backwards," Foster said. "The desire to remain at the top is still there, to take one step further if we can and it would be magic if, next week, we could publish our hopes for the future on the back of a win over Gloucester."

Wakefield's success this season has come through their back division, where the loyalty of Dave Scully and Mike Jackson at full back has served them well. Five of their players have appeared in the successful North under-21 team this season and one, Dean Hardcastle, was an England replacement in the under-21 international against Scotland last month.

"That's encouraging for us but we need a bit of timber up front," Foster admitted. Yet his club will relish yet another high-profile cup game, thus far they have beaten Waterloo and Moseley, fellow second-division clubs, so Gloucester gives added focus.

"The cup means a great deal to us because of our previous exploits, we have always enjoyed it," Foster said. Two years ago they beat Gloucester 19-9; a year ago Bath, Sleaford, and all, were 45 seconds away from an ignominious defeat; there are no guarantees for visitors to Wakefield.

SNOOKER

Drago wins war of nerves

By PHIL YATES

TONY DRAGO, a bundle of often uncontrolled nervous energy, made his debut in the semi-finals of a world ranking tournament a winning one by edging John Higgins, the side-holder, 6-5 in an enthralling contest at the International Open in Aberdeen yesterday. Higgins, undefeated in five previous meetings with Drago and in 17 matches during an event that he was aiming to win for a third successive year, was confidently expected to protect his record on both counts, but did not play anywhere near his best.

Breaks of 57 and 106 gave Drago, from Malta, a 2-1 lead and he recovered from a 4-0 deficit in the eighth frame with a 67 clearance to brown to

move 5-3 ahead. Holding a 6-4 advantage at an advanced stage of the ninth frame, Drago had one foot and four toes in the final.

Drago squandered an opportunity to wrap up proceedings, however, and Higgins, who rallied from 6-0 down to him 9-8 in the last 16 of the United Kingdom championship three months ago, refused to relinquish his grip on the trophy.

Higgins made a 71 clearance to steal the frame on the black, and won a fraught tenth by clipping the pink in a top pocket. At that point, given Drago's propensity to crack in such circumstances, Higgins was rightly considered an overwhelming favourite, and

there was certainly no denying Drago's growing nervousness.

Unable to sit still in his chair while Higgins was at the table, he resembled an expectant father pacing the maternally ward. Yet Drago retained his composure with a 59 break in the deciding frame to secure at least £32,000. "I knew I had guts, but not that much," Drago said. "I'm the happiest man in the world."

The elimination of Higgins afforded Stephen Hendry, the 5-2 quarter-final conqueror of Jimmy White on Thursday, the chance to further tighten his grip on top spot in the provisional world rankings.

RESULTS: Gender: Scott J Higgins (Scot) 5-2 S Hendry (Eng) 5-4. Match: J White (Eng) 5-2 S Melling (Eng) 5-4.

Champions

Cardiff keep champagne on ice

By ANDREW LONGMORE
Finds ice hockey's
champions short of
a suitable stage

It says something for the confidence of Cardiff Devils and the savvy of their marketing staff that, within minutes of winning the inaugural ice hockey Superleague title, T-shirts celebrating the fact were on sale in the Wales national ice rink. For the Devils, a 6-4 victory over Manchester Storm, which brought them the championship with game to spare, was a welcome return to winning ways. This was the club's fourth championship, but their first for two years. The wait was beginning to lay heavy on a club born only ten years ago but bred on success.

It was just a shame nobody brought the trophy along. For all the inevitable rendering of *We Are The Champions* and the wild scenes of celebration, the players had to make do with their standard issue bottles of Bud rather than sipping champagne from a silver cup – an apt comment

SUPERLEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	OL	F	A	Ps
Cardiff	41	30	3	8	0	205	126	53
Sheffield	40	28	4	10	2	162	119	53
Nottingham	41	21	1	19	2	157	142	45
Ayr	40	16	5	9	0	120	90	44
Worcester	40	16	5	9	0	150	161	39
Manchester	40	13	3	24	1	133	134	30
Bracknell	40	13	2	25	1	158	195	22
Basingstoke	40	13	2	25	1	158	195	22

OL column indicates games lost in overtime. Teams are awarded one point for each loss

on the first year of the Superleague, which has seen plenty of fizz and a fair amount of froth. The presentation of the trophy will take place tonight before the Devils' final game, against Newcastle Cobras.

That the fall guys for the occasion should be Manchester Storm was appropriate – and not just because their coach, John Lawless, laid the foundations for the Devils' success in the early days. Lawless says ice hockey is "facility led". The Storm have the facility, in the 17,000-capacity Nynex Arena, but not the team. Cardiff have the team, not the facility.

As the players and the head coach, Paul Heavey, moved steadily into a lager-induced haze during a long night of celebration in Greely's Bar, thoughts would already have been turning to the future. The club's chief executive, David Temme, and Paul Guy, whose money has helped to bankroll this season's rising wage bill, were both away for the vital night

on the first turn and then was taken down on to the green by the contours of the surface. It rolled to within eight feet of the flag. Such skill was of no use in the end.

He was beaten 2 and 1 by Tim Hanson, who, in his morning match against Peter Cooper, had watched as Cooper's ball was blown several feet on the 5th green. "As he took his putt back the ball went with it," Hanson said. "I couldn't believe my eyes. I thought I was watching something out of David Copperfield."

The sides of the 5th green fall away. It has a ridge in it so that the right side is lower than the left and is set at an angle from the tee. In a south wind, the best line is well left, towards Cherbourg. Those attempting to play this hole on

such a day were reminded of Bernard Darwin's remark that "the most difficult shots in golf are the second shots to the short hole at Rye".

Though for many the green was unwelcoming and hostile, for Nick Burke it was the place of a minor triumph. His tee shot finished to the left of the

RESULTS FROM RYE

green, down a bank 15 feet below the putting surface. It could scarcely have been in a worse place. From such a

position, even the most gifted professional would have been pressed to keep his ball on the putting surface.

Burke chose to putt. He judged the steepness of the bank to perfection so that his ball just struggled to the top

with its last turn and then was taken down on to the green by the contours of the surface. It rolled to within eight feet of the flag. Such skill was of no use in the end.

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After two victories, Ted Dexter's story of the 5th went like this. "I was on the high side of the green and my first putt started well left, turned and rolled down past the hole and on and on. Until my second putt up the hill and it got to within six inches then began to trickle

back and it ended at my feet again." Tony Murley, Dexter's opponent, took up the story: "I was about to bend down and concede. Ted's second putt when it started to move again. It ended up further away in than he had been in two. In the end, we halved the hole in five."

When professional golfers complain about bad weather or poorly cut greens, it is days such as yesterday and incidents such as these that come to mind. The amateurs of the Oxford and Cambridge Golfing Society are starting to look to Britain as an alternative."

The rougher, tougher type

of player on their books has made Cardiff less popular on occasions this season and has highlighted the inadequacies of the disciplinary code. Even Heavey, a defender of players in the mould of his fellow Scot, Alex Ferguson, admits that the administrative side of the Superleague has suffered from a lot of teething problems.

Certainly, raised standards on the ice have not been matched off it.

The Devils are deserved champions, though, and you only had to watch Shannon Hope, Cardiff's veteran defenceman, racing children round the rink and signing autographs until his hand ached in the aftermath of victory to sense how desperately this sport wants to succeed.

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The Devils are deserved champions

THE TIMES SATURDAY FEBRUARY 22 1997

CRICKET: PLAYERS RESPONDING TO MODERN GAME AND METHODS OF PREPARATION

England dance to different tune

FROM ALAN LEE
CRICKET CORRESPONDENT
IN AUCKLAND

EVEN the most curmudgeonly of observers must concede that there is a strikingly noteworthy aspect of England's recent cricket. It is not just that they are winning games, it is that the players—including those of distinctly unathletic build and gait—look strong, fit and agile.

Already, one can sense a grain of scepticism from the aficionados of the traditionalists, where fitness regimes have never been well received. Cricketers, so they maintain, should get fit by playing cricket, just as they always used to do.

This edict, however, applied to another generation, virtually another game. The cricketers of today have so many more questions asked of mind and body than did their predecessors. Only three months into a tour covering two countries, know what it is to encounter a string of limited-overs games, with their excessive demands on physical well-being, at a time when mental energy and motivation are at a premium. They are doing so now, with a second

game of five scheduled for tomorrow at Eden Park.

England have been shamefully slow to recognise the needs of the modern game. This is the first tour on which two experts have catered for the players' physical welfare, but the belated acknowledgement is having its reward—visibly, in the case of unrecognisable fielding and catching standards, and less tangibly in the improved levels of stamina to concentrate through a taxing day.

Wayne Morton, the England physiotherapist, has been waging war on reactionary philosophies since he came into cricket 13 years ago. "To acquire fitness requires toughness, preparation and amitude," he said, "and in cricket there is a constant battle against long tradition and resistance. But I struggle far less with the players of today and more with the people who used to play."

"When I started out in cricket, the attitudes to fitness were antiquated. We still lag behind other countries, and because I am fighting a corner it seems to me that changes are not happening fast enough. To a traditionalist, it is probably moving too fast."

It was the idea of Morton, a Yorkshireman, to spread the workload by recruiting a specialist trainer. "Fitness in cricket had always been the province of the physios, but I increasingly found myself dragged in two directions and that we also needed a different input. I knew there was a role for a fitness expert—I just had to persuade the [Test and County Cricket] Board."

Morton won his point and Dean Riddle, ironically a New

Zealand, was recruited. Riddle had spent ten years training rugby league teams, the past seven in England, and has found little difficulty adapting his methods.

We spoke towards the end of the Christchurch Test. Riddle had just taken three of the unemployed players for a session of swimming and "water-based running". At close of play, others would be identified for shuttle runs on the outfield. Morton grinned mischievously: "Dean gets all the abuse from them now. I'm the good guy again."

"Cricketers are human and

training often seems an unpleasant thing to do. We cannot expect to impose concepts and change things overnight but, in a few years' time, every new player will accept these routines as the norm."

Morton and Riddle have devised some training games that, to an outsider, seem irrelevant, even infantile. Yet the noisy, hyperactive routines, one of them a kind of basketball played with a tennis ball, all have their purpose. "It is for agility, for the reflexes, for hand-eye co-ordination and for player communication," Riddle said.

"Equally, we may give them a game that has no special relevance other than to warm them up in a way they find interesting. Variety is the key—we constantly change the formulas to keep them thinking and so they don't know how much they are doing. It would be hard, for instance, to get a player to do 20 40-metre sprints straight off, but play football for half an hour and he will probably do 60."

Both men speak of diet, of energy levels and of their aim to create a national fitness database so that cricketers can constantly be assessed. But they relate to the players' own



Croft and Tufnell enjoy the success their improved levels of fitness has helped them to achieve

Jury still out after Kray funds appeal

SIMON BARNES



On Saturday

ASHFIELD 95, a football club from Kirby in Nottinghamshire, has appointed a new president—Reggie Kray. Now 63 and jailed for 30 years for the murder of Jack "The Hat" McVitie and being accessory to the murder of George Cornell, Kray has contributed £1,000 to Ashfield 95.

He issued his first statement as president from Maidstone prison: "I am very pleased the team has honoured me in this way. I have always had a soft spot for Nottinghamshire since I spent a few years in Nottingham prison. The people are really friendly and Nottingham is my second favourite city after London."

For some reason, not everyone is ecstatic about this appointment. Mick Kilbee, assistant secretary to the Nottinghamshire FA, said: "We have written to the club asking them to explain the situation in writing. Meanwhile, we are reserving judgment until we hear from them."

Ashfield wrote to Kray after a number of others had turned down their request for money, which they want to help them find a better ground. The Prince's Trust rejected them; Kray did not.

Take five

The willow is covered in pussies and the song of the song thrush echoes through the land. Can the third sign of spring be far behind? No: this column's annual *Wisden* competition is with us once again. All you have to do is work out who the editor, Matthew Engel, has selected as the five *Wisden* cricketers of the year.

The *Wisden* award traditionally goes to the five players who have illuminated the English season of the previous summer; a player can only win it once. However, there is something rum going on this year. Engel dropped one of his subtle hints: "Remember that the selection of the cricketers, and even the criteria by which he selects them, are entirely a matter of the editor's judgment." Engel may have played a wild card this year.

A copy of *Wisden 1997* goes to the five entries closest to Engel's selection: I am the sole judge of proximity. Entries must reach me by March 10.

The biters bit

Bandit held up a car near Warsaw, in Poland, and were set to rob the occupants, Konstant Valgin and Gennady Remensky. But help was at hand. The two men are coaches to the biathlon teams of Russia and Belarus, and they were returning from the world championships in Slovakia.

Biathlon? Yes, the event that combines skiing and marksmanship—and the two teams were travelling behind. The four highwaymen found themselves surrounded by two dozen men armed with rifles. Wisely, they surrendered.

Pulling together

As everyone knows, the world indoor tug-of-war championship is taking place this week at the Torbay Leisure Centre. Tug-of-war is one of the most ancient of all sports; there is a wall engraving of competing tug-of-warriors in an Egyptian tomb, dated at 2500 BC.

10p

THE TIMES

ON MONDAY, A GUIDE TO THE LATEST TRAFFIC CONGESTION.



On Monday in The Times, see the free 20-page Grand Prix '97 guide. There's a preview of the new Formula 1 season, an intriguing look at the team drivers and up-and-coming stars. There's also the chance to play Formula 1 and win Michael Schumacher's pocket money—that's £25,000.

<http://www.the-times.co.uk>

CHANGING TIMES

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THE TIMES GUIDE TO THE PREMIERSHIP THIS WEEKEND

ARSENAL

How long can Arsène Wenger, the manager, continue in his strange state of denial? Obviously defending his players' excesses on the field has its own nemesis. The fact is that Arsenal's prospects this season in league and cup have been severely damaged by the rash of suspensions. Far better educated and more sophisticated than the average manager, it is surely in his own and Arsenal's interest for Wenger to come down heavily on offenders, rather than try to excuse them. BG

DERBY COUNTY

Jim Smith has learnt a few tricks during his years in management, and one is to know when to put the frighteners on his players. Having gone without a league win since November, Smith took them to a haunted house in Stratford-upon-Avon. "There were trapdoors everywhere, and some of the lads slept with the lights on," Gary Rowett, the central defender, said. The result? Four points from two games since, and much more spirit in the camp. RH

MANCHESTER UNITED

After the bitter encounter at Highbury, United were still counting their bruises yesterday. "There are a few bruises and strains which we have to check on," Alex Ferguson, the manager, said. "But Pally [Gary Pallister] is the only concern." If he is ruled out, David May will step back in. Nicky Butt is out for up to six weeks, and Eric Cantona is still suspended, leaving Cole and Solksjaer to continue the partnership that was so effective against Arsenal. PB

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY

David Pleat, the manager, was not a happy man this week, despite a rather important FA Cup victory at Bradford. It was Chris Waddle, a former player, who raised his hackles, with comments comparing Wednesday to Wimbledon. "Obviously whoever said that doesn't know too much about football," he said. "We have a different system, so it is a ridiculous comparison. Maybe it was a compliment, because Wimbledon are passing the ball around well, just like us." DM

SUNDERLAND

The encounter with Leeds today at Roker Park evokes memories of the 1973 FA Cup Final, which Sunderland won 1-0, courtesy of Ian Porterfield's goal and Jim Montgomery's superb double save. The latest temporary newcomers at Sunderland are two Danes, René Pedersen and Kim Heisler. While Sam Aiston, the promising young winger, is gaining match practice on loan at Chester, Peter Reid, the manager, is casting covetous eyes at Grimsby's teenage left winger, John Oster.

ASTON VILLA

Thou shalt not make fun of the physiotherapist ... as Mark Draper, the Villa midfield player, has found to his cost. Draper thought that his past jesting with Jim Walker, the Villa Park spongeman, had been forgotten until he began his rehabilitation from a hernia operation. Running, running and then more running was prescribed for the breathless Draper, prompting him to muse: "I used to wonder why Jim never came in for a lot of hamper. Now I know." RK

LEEDS UNITED

With Mark Schwarzer turning them down, and Neville Southall looking to go into management, Everton are suddenly

in need of a goalkeeper. And not just a

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Winning means survival for the little big club that dare not lose

Hammam passionate about his gang

SAM HAMMAM

THE FACE OF FOOTBALL



By Rob Hughes

It is not lost on Sam Hammam that the little club that he owns and runs tackles Arsenal, the north London giant, tomorrow. Which is the superior force in the capital?

They come from opposite ends of the FA Carling Premiership's fair play league, with Wimbledon in unaccustomed position near the top, and Arsenal bottom. Wimbledon, with a third of Arsenal's support at very best, have three times the opportunities to reach European competition at the end of this season ... and Hammam, a Lebanese Christian and a refugee from civil war, is elated at the status of his club. He will tell you a dozen times in half an hour that nobody — nobody — has better cover in their squad than Wimbledon FC. "We could put one of two teams out at a Highbury tomorrow," he enthuses, "and both of them would give Arsenal a game."

Hammam's enthusiasm, his torrent of words, his almost evangelical crusade for Wimbledon is like Vesuvius; there is energy and combustion to spare.

And yet, when he pauses at his Regents Park home for reflection, Hammam, the businessman who has sold construction ideas throughout the Middle East, admits that he has fear, almost loathing, for the new money that is turning football into an unrecognisable business scrum. "Once we are directors answering to shareholders and to the City, then we have transformed our-



Hammam, who bought Wimbledon on a whim and made it a phenomenal success, says the club's rise stands as a ray of hope to others

selves from a football club to a commodity," he reasoned.

He bought into this club, soon bought a majority, on an impulse; when his wife came to England to give birth to their daughter at St Theresa's Hospital, in Wimbledon. It was not, he insists, an investment; he knew next to nothing about the club, about football or the business that it might become. "It is one of those things that you do when you travel," he recalls. "You buy a vase, you fall in love with a girl, you buy her things you should not."

What has become of that young man's fancy, and the 19-year journey of Wimbledon from Southern League semi-professionalism? "We are in the top five in England for consistency over the last ten years," he booms. "There is Liverpool, Arsenal, Manchester United and Everton

... and they are only ahead of us by a nose."

"So what are we to football? The other clubs, from the biggest to the smallest, look at what we have achieved and what we maintain, and we represent hope — capital letters H.O.P.E."

In the rare instances when he pauses, one's eye strays to the antique books, the exquisite furnishings, the swords and daggers in the living room. "My background is from an academic family," he observes. "I come from Dhourshweir, 3,000 feet high in the mountains. We could look towards Syria or to the sea."

Now, with his three children here in the United States, he is Sam the Wimbledon Man. He will tell you he knows little more today than when he started about the outside law, about football ... and they are only ahead of us by a nose."

This, if Jones has stepped out of order, Hammam will sort him out, though in public he will defend the player. He

tacitly, that is for his remarkable coach, his creator of silk purses out of sows ears, Joe Kinnear. Hammam will talk of the family, with himself as "both mother and father". He wants you to feel in your heart and your stomach what Wimbledon is about, because Hammam acknowledges that it cannot be rationalised in logical terms.

If pressed, he will admit to the coarse, abrasive, even ugly aspects of which he and the team dubbed the Crazy Gang have been accused. He will not apologise, not for Vinnie Jones, not for the scrawling on the walls of the West Ham United dressing-room. Wimbledon, he repeats, is family, and nobody touches his family.

This, if Jones has stepped out of order, Hammam will sort him out, though in public he will defend the player. He

defends, too, any probing questions about who subsidises the almost £2 million per annum losses of the club, with the answer: "It's family." In other words, it is in-house business.

But provoked, he will say: "I do not accept from anyone how to set the standards of behaviour. If the FA charge Joe Kinnear, do you think Joe Kinnear pays his fine? I pay his fine, it is made up in the salary tax included."

He talks of each of the managers who have passed through his Wimbledon odyssey, specifying what they gave to the club, what loyalty he still reciprocates to them. Noting that Bobby Gould has been under recent criticism as manager of Wales, the combative Hammam says: "We have debts at Wimbledon because Bobby succeeded in buying a good number of players, some

of whom we eventually sold to rebuild our team. With the money for Keith Curle, we bought six players — Robbie Earle, Dean Holdsworth, the miraculous Marcus Gayle, Warren Barton, Alan Kimble and Jones."

Hammam is clutching a fat brown file, its pages are daubed with yellow highlighter, noting the youth players in other clubs' reserves that he might like to buy, investments for the future of the little big club that Hammam says wins because it dare not lose.

"Wimbledon cannot go down," he confides. "If we do, we lose not £2 million a year, but maybe £7 million, because we lose the television money. We are winners because that is our only survival, our hope. Right now we are flavour of the day, as soon as things turn you will see how the dogs come out."

Oldham put Warnock in charge of salvage operation

NEIL WARNOCK and Andy Ritchie were yesterday confirmed as the new management team of Oldham Athletic. Warnock, the former Plymouth Argyle, Huddersfield Town and Notts County manager, has been given until the end of the season to save the club from relegation.

Oldham are bottom of the Nationwide League first division and today face Bradford City, who are one place above them. Ritchie is returning to the club where he enjoyed the best spell of his playing career.

"We have nine home games left and I hope we can put together a good run," Warnock, who was sacked by Plymouth at the beginning of the month, said. "I've come here until the end of the season. I am hoping to impress the chairman but it's a two-way thing. I hope Oldham impress me as well."

Bobby Robson's future as manager of Barcelona looked more certain yesterday — despite another defeat. A 2-0 reverse at Real Sociedad on Thursday meant that Robson's team missed out on a chance to close the gap on Real Madrid, the league leaders, and increased the pressure from supporters.

However, Josep Lluís Núñez, the president said: "Despite the criticism of the coach, Barcelona remains the best team and I want Robson to see out this season and the next one as well."

Garry Parker, the Leicester City midfield player, is prepared to make a last-minute journey from his wife's hospital bedside to play at Fulbert Street.

Parker's wife, Petra, went into labour four months prematurely earlier this week and doctors are trying to save the baby. Marin O'Neill, the Leicester manager, said: "Garry is hoping everything is alright at the hospital and that he will be okay to play. He knows he has until the last minute before making his decision."

Talks on the future of Brighton were postponed for a second time yesterday.

RUGBY LEAGUE

Branson looking for early success

By CHRISTOPHER IRVINE

ALTHOUGH virgins in business terms, London Broncos are no pushovers. Richard Branson is due at the newest corner of his empire and will deign his 15 per cent stake in the club particularly worthwhile if Bradford Bulls are beaten in the televised Silk Cut Challenge Cup fifth-round tie today.

It was a tremendous effort last season by London to finish in the top four of the Super League. The backbone of that side remains, but the Broncos have brought with them from their Queensland training camp a fresh crop of young Australians, including Josh White, the former Illawarra scrum half, of whom much is expected alongside Tusi Tellett, the Great Britain international.

Until a much-vaunted youth system begins to percolate through to the first XIII the Broncos must rely on imported talent. As outrageous as his claim about the Broncos being the world force in three or four years sounded, Barry Maranta, like Branson, gets results. Before he bought the London club, Maranta helped make Brisbane Broncos the biggest sporting organisation in Australia.

At the redeveloped Stoop Memorial ground, there is the chance to put down roots and tap into the potentially big audience that Maranta and Branson are convinced exists. A winning side is imperative, and if London could reach the final at Wembley, on May 3, they really will have arrived.

However, the instantly recognisable player to watchers of Harlequins, who the Broncos hope to convert in their tenancy agreement with the rugby union club, is Robbie Paul, the Bradford captain. After his recent short spell with Harlequins, Paul is more familiar with the tightly-packed ground than the Broncos players.

Paul, 21, already has a place in Challenge Cup history as the player who scored three tries and was on the losing side in the classic final against St Helens last year. If they find some way of stifling his mercurial talents, London can cause an upset. The Bulls had the edge last year in two close encounters.

Iestyn Harris, the Wales and Britain back, who has not played for Warrington since the club put him for sale last July at a prohibitive £1.35 million, is among the substitutes for the home tie against Sheffield Eagles tomorrow.

Until he was invited to return last week, he trained alone. His value was underlined in a try-scoring comeback on Thursday for the reserve team. In a third all-Super League tie, home advantage and a veteran pack, in which David Hulme, 33, is promoted from the bench, should see Salford through at the expense of Paris Saint-Germain.

Lee Briers, 19, takes over the scrum half and place-kicking responsibilities from the suspended Robbie Goulding for St Helens, at home to Hull.

Le Tissier stands by his Italian job

Dominique Baldy hears the England striker reject criticism of his role

Matthew Le Tissier has spoken for the first time about his disappointment in England's defeat by Italy in their World Cup qualifying match and about the criticism heaped upon him afterwards.

"I knew that if we didn't win, then no matter how well I played, the story would be it was because Hoddle took a gamble by picking Le Tissier," he said. "If the header I had in the first half had gone in, the headlines would have been very different. But I'm not surprised by the reaction, as the press have been waiting for a while for a chance to have a go at me and now they've taken it."

Le Tissier, who will be playing for Southampton against Sheffield Wednesday

today, said that the England coach, Glenn Hoddle, did not hold him responsible for England's failure. "I've spoken to Glenn on the phone since the game and he told me that, watching the video of the match since, he thought I looked the player most likely to score and that he now feels he should have kept me on a little longer."

In Le Tissier's view, the new coach to the Italy team, Cesare Maldini, has rejuvenated a side demoralised by the tactics of his predecessor, Arrigo Sacchi, and it was hardly coincidental that, confronted by a reorganised Italian de-

fense right on top of its game, none of England's attacking players enjoyed a night to remember.

"Why can't we just acknowledge the fact that the Italians are a very good team?" Le Tissier asked. "People forget they were only knocked out of the European championship early because the coach at the time messed about with the side so much." Le Tissier is, perhaps, more angered by what he considers a distortion of the facts surrounding allegations that his brother, Carl, was responsible for Le Tissier's team in advance.

"That's been completely misunderstood. Newspapers printed the team the morning of the game and I understand it was in the Italian papers the day before. Radio Guernsey then went to my brother with that information and asked him for his reaction to my being selected. Nobody seems to have asked who was responsible for the original leak and I find that annoying."

Le Tissier's next opportunity is to play in an international friendly that has yet to fully get off the ground should come against Mexico on March 29.

If he manages to illuminate that evening with one of his moments of genius, the disappointment of ten days ago will soon be forgotten. If not, then he will have no illusions about what to expect in the newspapers the next day.

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RACING 46, 47

Nicholson deals up strong hand for Racing Post Chase

SPORT

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 22 1997

RUGBY UNION 46

Dawson returns to centre stage in Pilkington Cup



Shake hands for good of the game

Rob Hughes, football correspondent, on why Wright and Schmeichel must bury the hatchet in a public reconciliation

FOR the better part of an hour at Highbury on Wednesday, football was enriched by a spectacle of ball-control beyond anyone's expectations in gale-force conditions.

By the end of the night, that enrichment was contaminated by irresponsible behaviour by Ian Wright and from then until today, instead of just a game, the affair has disintegrated into a question of racism that, in the present climate of the country, is dangerous beyond the emotions of sport.

Wright appeared on television on Thursday night to disclaim any culpability. "I did nothing wrong," he insisted. "He [Peter Schmeichel, the Manchester United goalkeeper, whose leg might have been broken by Wright's horrendous two-footed tackle] is my fellow pro and I'm not going to say I want anything to happen to him."

So, the Arsenal idol, Wright, insists that he made no complaint about an alleged racist remark

from Schmeichel when they last met and roared in public at Old Trafford in November, insists that he won the ball with his tackle, insists that nothing untoward happened in the tunnel at the end of the Premiership game on Wednesday. The television pictures, the still photographs — showing not only the destructive nature of Wright's tackle, but the bitter dislike of these two professional performers for one another — and the evidence of police intervention in the tunnel are, then, all bogus.

This is a sickening ramifications of bad blood that has festered between United and Arsenal for a decade. It split over into a mass brawl involving 21 players in 1990; clearly too few people learnt from the fines of £50,000 imposed on each club and the deduction of points. And, apart from Gordon Taylor, the chief executive of the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA), no one has acted

swiftly between Wednesday night and Saturday morning to try to take responsibility, to acknowledge that something has to be done and quickly if the national sport is to maintain its integrity.

Football, perhaps more than any other single activity, can bring harmony between the races. The sight of Schmeichel, big and blond and Danish, verbally bullying those around him, including some of his own defenders, is destabilising. Wright, black and from south London, can be a charming, even loquacious conversationalist, yet he came late into football with a chip on both shoulders and his record of indiscipline is a litany of obscenities, both visual and verbal.

To wait, as the Football Association is customarily doing for reports, to wait inevitably for the processes of law, emanating from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) investigation into the first alleged racist argument between

and flawed process through the courts would leave impressions as ugly as stud marks on the game and on the public's view of intolerance within it.

The allegation against the Denmark international was refuted yesterday by Alex Ferguson, the Manchester United manager. "We can categorically deny any racist remark whatsoever from Peter Schmeichel," he said.

However, Taylor was correct to seek — before the coming-together in acrimony of Wright and Schmeichel on Wednesday — to act as mediator between the pair. He was correct in suggesting that the FA was the proper umbrella for this mediation, but what a pity that Lancaster Gate dithered, prefer-

ring to put off any action unless, or until, police concluded their investigation.

Wright, of course, can do no wrong. Arsenal, inevitably, tell us so. Arsène Wenger, their French manager, chose yesterday to joke: "Maybe they will meet before the next game and sort this out — and kill one another!"

These are the very last words we need to hear in the present situation. We have a public game, two highly paid public figures and around them, an atmosphere in which a national newspaper has recently taken upon itself to name with photographs, white youths who they say killed a black person simply because of racial intolerance.

This afternoon, in stadiums throughout Britain, football again will engage our emotions. The winner-takes-all philosophy means that some player, somewhere, may take his cue from Wright, a

member of the England international squad.

"I have seen many, many tackles and punches that have not been judged or seen by referees and nobody talks about them," Wenger insisted. His own club happens to be bottom of the fair play league, with 59 yellow cards and four red ones in 27 FA Carling Premiership games, yet Wenger will not apologise for indiscipline.

If Arsenal has nothing better to offer in this matter, if the FA is merely lying back waiting, then perhaps Taylor must go it alone. Football needs an immediate and public handshake, a cessation of hostile words and actions, from Wright and Schmeichel. One hopes that the PFA can arrange this, can, in the sporting vernacular, "knock their heads together" and remind the players of Arsenal and Manchester United what they earn from the game and what they owe to the public.

CLAUDIO SCACCINI

Chelsea prepare for test of title credentials

Gullit fails to tempt Kluivert from Ajax

BY RUSSELL KEMPSON AND PETER BALL

RUUD GULLIT'S empire building at Chelsea has received a temporary setback, with Patrick Kluivert, the Holland and Ajax striker, having declined to join the expanding foreign legion at Stamford Bridge. Gullit's audacious attempt failed because of Kluivert's preference to play in Italy, for AC Milan, rather than in England when he leaves Ajax at the end of the season.

Gullit's move, though unsuccessful, is barely surprising. His contacts extend deep into Europe, built from a highly successful playing career, and he has persuaded Gianluca Vialli, Gianfranco Zola, Roberto Di Matteo and Frank Leboeuf to forsake the continent for West London this season.

The offers of vast salaries have helped entice the three Italians and Leboeuf, a Frenchman, but even reported wages of £25,000-a-week were not enough to lure Kluivert, 20, from Amsterdam. He will follow a similar route to Gullit, the Chelsea player-manager, who left PSV Eindhoven for AC Milan in 1987.



Kluivert bound for Milan

"I wanted Patrick but I couldn't get him," Gullit said yesterday, after completing his side's preparations for their FA Carling Premiership match against Manchester United at Stamford Bridge this afternoon. "He made his own decision and wanted to try things in Italy."

"I made an attempt, I watched him, I did everything. Nobody knows that, but I go to Holland often and I do my job. But if the player wants to make the same adventure as I

did, that's OK," Gullit may yet try again. "I've told Patrick that I will wait a year and if it does not go well for him, then I will be back. I am making preparations for next season and anyone can see that we are short of bodies. We don't need just players, we need good players."

However, Paul Ince, the England and Internazionale midfield player, does not enter the Chelsea equation. Gullit was unimpressed by the pairing of Ince and David Batty, of Newcastle United, when England lost 1-0 to Italy in their World Cup qualifying match at Wembley last week.

"I have no interest in Paul," Gullit said. "We have a similar player in Eddie Newton and having two players like that, you will get the same thing that happened for England against Italy. I'm very happy with Eddie, he's doing very well and I don't need him and find in the same area."

Chelsea need to win today to retain any interest in the title chase. They trail United, the leaders, by 12 points, but have games in hand and were the

last side to beat them, when they won 2-1 at Old Trafford in November.

Mark Hughes, the Chelsea striker, who spent 13 years with United, recognises there is no room for error. "If we don't get any kind of result, it will be difficult for us to make a challenge," he said. "I'm not saying it would be the end for us, but it would make them very difficult to catch."

"United have been setting the standards for the last five or six years. Week in, week out, they turn in results. That's what we have to find. They never panic, they always keep their shape and do what they believe in because they know it works. We've got to get on to that level. What helps United is winning things for years — that breeds confidence. Until we win something, we'll be behind them."

Dennis Wise, the Chelsea midfield player, said: "We always seem to do well against United and now everyone is praying that we beat them again, open it up and give everyone else a chance."

"It's a big game for us, but we have a plan which we will stick to. We know we're capable of achieving a place in Europe now we will find out if we can go on to something more."

United's pursuit of a fourth title in five years was strengthened by their decisive, if controversial, 2-1 victory against Arsenal at Highbury on Wednesday night — a result that stretched their unbeaten league run to 14 matches. Peter Schmeichel, the United goalkeeper, was again involved in an unsavoury incident with Ian Wright, the Arsenal striker.

The players are strong, they have looked really good in training and they are handling the whole thing the right way," Alex Ferguson, the United manager, said. "They are not going to be derailed. We must keep focused and not think of side issues."

Schmeichel has two stud marks and swelling on his right ankle, the legacy of a late challenge from Wright, but is expected to retain his place. Gary Pallister and Denis Irwin are doubtful because of injuries and Eric Cantona completes a two-match suspension, but Ferguson is likely to continue with the experimental pairing of Andy Cole and Ole Gunnar Solskjær up front.

Blackburn left in limbo by Eriksson's Italian job

BY DAVID MADDOCK

IT WAS the worst kept secret in football, but Blackburn Rovers finally stopped deferring themselves long enough to concede, yesterday, a truth that anybody with a passing interest has known for months — Sven Goran Eriksson, the Swede, will not be joining them as the next manager.

In a terse statement, Jack Walker, the owner of Blackburn, expressed his disappointment after a lengthy conversation with Eriksson resolved the saga.

"He has told us that he and his family want to stay in Italy, and that he would like to join Lazio when his contract with Sampdoria expires," Walker said. "It is terribly disappointing because we had a firm contract with him and we were looking forward to him coming here."

Eriksson, for his part, did have the grace to apologise. "I would like to say sorry to the Blackburn supporters because the speculation cannot have

been easy for them to accept," he said. "It has been an unfair situation and I was anxious to conclude it as soon as possible. My family are very happy and settled here."

So Blackburn find themselves in a familiar position, that of searching for a manager of sufficiently high profile to appease their restless supporters and lift the club back to a search for a manager this time around. They have already made informal contact with Hodgson and received an encouraging reply. Formal talks could begin almost immediately.

At least one new face arrived at Blackburn yesterday in the shape of Per Pedersen, 21, a Denmark international who moved there for £25 million from Odense. He signed a 4½-year contract after passing a medical examination that lasted 11 hours and will be in the squad to play Liverpool this afternoon.

They may already, in fact,

have a suitable candidate, who was alerted during the last round of approaches. Roy Hodgson, the English-born coach of Internazionale, in

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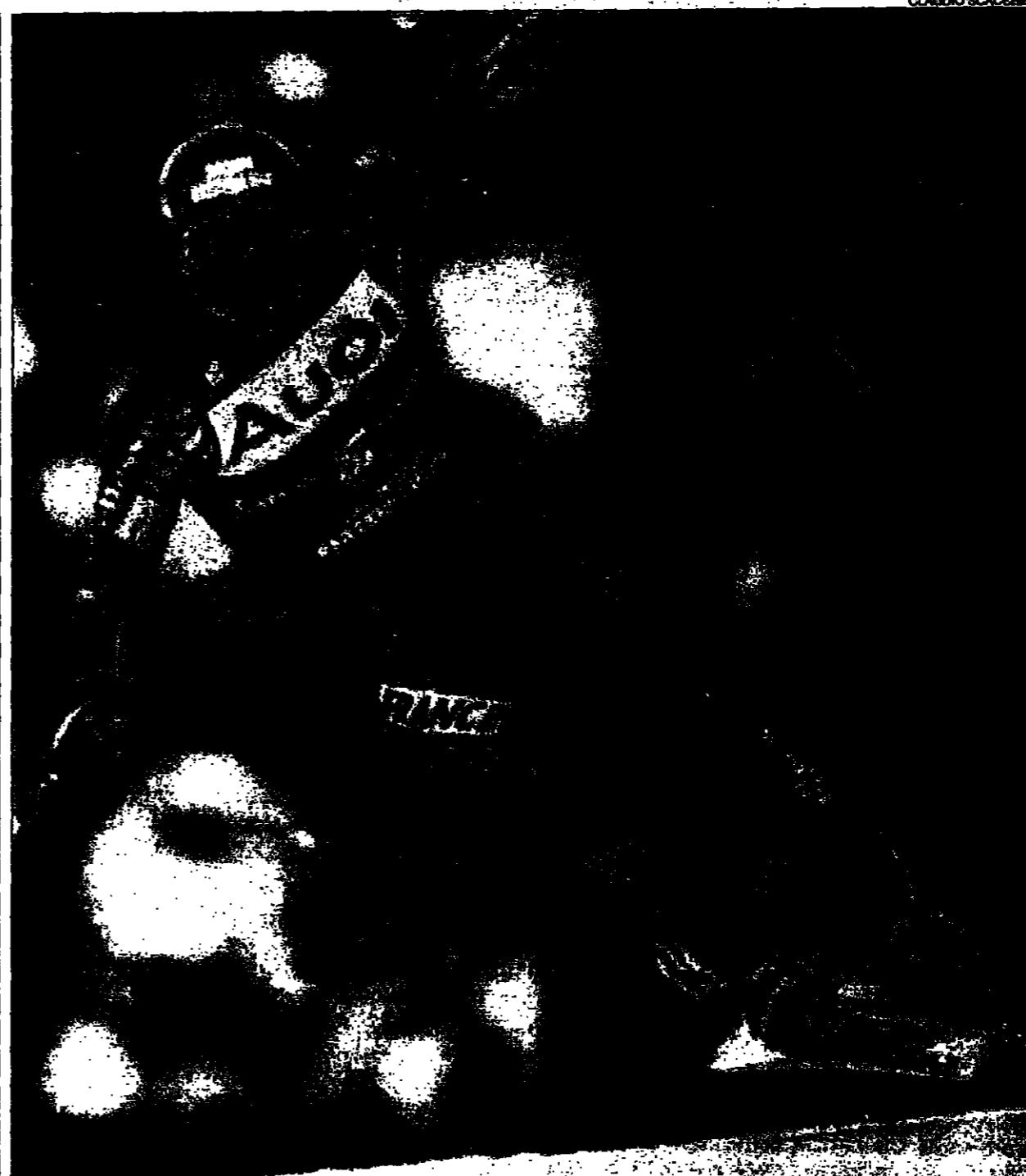
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Luc Alphand, of France, hurtles towards victory in the super giant slalom World Cup event at Garmisch-Partenkirchen yesterday, proving that

his failure to win a medal at the recent world championships in Sestriere was a rare aberration in an all-conquering season. His success gave him the lead

in the overall World Cup standings. "Forget about the world championships," he said. "That's all water under the bridge."

Hingis replaces Graf in driving seat

BY OUR SPORTS STAFF

MARTINA HINGIS, the Swiss tennis sensation, who is not yet old enough to drive, has signed a three-year sponsorship deal with Opel, the car company. In the latest of a series of business agreements, Hingis, 16, signed a three-year contract with the General Motors subsidiary on Thursday. She replaces Steffi Graf.

Hingis, who won the Australian Open last month to become the youngest grand-slam event champion in 100 years, has moved up to No 2 in the world rankings. Even before her recent triumph in Melbourne, she had signed a \$10 million, five-year deal with Sergio Tacchini, the Italian sportswear company.

GM Europe spokesman said yesterday: "Relations remain good between us and

Steffi Graf, even though there is no formal contract. We didn't separate on bad terms."

He added that GM Europe had close links with Hingis and her family for the past four years. "It's just a new chapter," he said.

Marc Goller, of Germany, made comfortable progress in the semi-finals of the European Community championship in Antwerp yesterday as Martin Damm, his opponent from the Czech Republic, retired injured soon after the start of their match.

Damm, ranked No 48 in the world, had needed treatment for a twisted ankle on

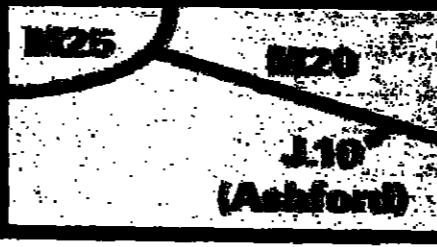
Thursday in the closing stages of his second-round victory over Marcelo Rios, the No 2 seed from Chile.

Goller, the world No 57, had not beaten Damm in their two previous meetings but was in complete control during the 13-minute contest.

He broke the Czech's service egg 2-0 ahead and took a 3-0 lead with an ace. Goller faces the winner of the quarter-final between Tim Henman, the British No 1 and sole surviving seed, and Fabrice Clavet, a clay-court master from Spain, who has taken three sets to win each of his previous two matches.

To really fly to Paris or Brussels, take Eurostar from Ashford, Kent.

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Ginny
Dougray:
men dining
à deux
home life . 15

THE TIMES weekend

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 22 1997

Mexico
and its
exotica
for lunch
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LINDA McDougall, PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOHN ANGELSON



FRIDAY

Austin has a letter from Tony Blair in the post at home asking him for help in running the country.

"... together you and I can make it possible for everyone to have a fair chance of a job..."

Rapid shallow breathing. Then we spot:

"... if you intend to vote Labour, will you send us fifteen quid..."

A cruel trick. You'd think they'd be more sensitive in the pan-handling unit at Millbank Tower.

I've booked us a holiday. We're off on the 21st of March or the 11th of April or the 2nd of May. It's up to John Major. Austin [Mitchell] has been MP for Grimsby for nearly 20 years and, now that there's a distinct possibility of a Labour victory, local people who don't understand the secret world of Westminster are asking him what ministerial job he'll get and what car.

Having "difficult" views on Europe, and a rapidly approaching bus pass make an MP, well, hard to place (unless he's Alan Clark). Austin doesn't really want to sit around explaining his failure, while the phone never rings. So we're off to Death Valley, California.

One of the few perks I get as an MP's wife is 15 first-class return tickets between London and

home every year. On Friday afternoons I head for King's Cross and the Great North Eastern Railway (InterCity privatised, but still preserving the unique public relations style of old British Rail).

Watched by a youthful ticket clerk, I make a bit of a mess filling in my destination on the warrant form. I have been using warrants for 20 years, changing them, spilling coffee on them, even forging. A signature (*in extremis*) No one (smile brilliantly here) has ever rejected one before.

"Well, I'm rejecting it, and you'll have to buy a ticket," barks the triumphant supervisor.

Seventy-five quid! Can't make a fuss, the impatient people queuing behind me are almost certainly Grimsby voters heading home.

Arrive home to find Austin in the kitchen. He has a large hammer and is crashing up and down on my lovingly restored antique pine table.

"Hello darling, what are you doing?" (or something like that), I say. He has lost his car aerial and is crafting a new one from a wire coat hanger (and he

wonders why he's not ministerial material).

SATURDAY

Eric phones. Eric is Troublemaker in Chief. Sometimes a party member, sometimes not. Head honcho of the "Save Britain's Fish" campaign. He's 70 plus, rides a bicycle, wears a beret and a monocle and has absolutely all our home and office phone numbers. He phones and faxes at any hour of the day and night.

Eric is very worried. He has heard that Tony Blair is going to ban Eurosceptics like Austin from taking a stand against EMU. Eric has just finished crafting panels for Austin's car, which scream, "Save Britain's fish. Save Britain's pound" in 5ft-high letters. Will he be able to get away with this; or will Peter Mandelson personally appear on the 15.30 to Cleethorpes to tear them from the car? Say I'm not sure but

will consult A and call back. Hang up.

Eric phones again instantly. He is also installing a loudspeaker in the car so that he can shout, "Save Britain's fish. Save Britain's pound. Vote Labour!"

What will Tony Blair have to say about this? Remember all the complaints about Eric sounding like Hitler in previous elections. Suggest panels will have stunning impact and sound is not necessary. Eric extremely cross.

SUNDAY

There is a service on St Andrew's Dock in Hull at noon to remember all the fishermen who have died at sea. The service is very moving. Hard-faced trawermen weep as we sing, "hear us as we cry to thee for those in peril on the sea",

and watch carnations scattered on the water float away to sea.

Afterwards I am chatting

with the Hull Euro MP Peter Crampson. Another Westminster MP, Stuart Randall, comes up and starts talking to Peter. Suddenly he thrusts a hand out to me and says: "Hello, I don't believe we have ever met." Stare at him in amazement and point out I am Austin's wife and not Peter's. And that he has known me for two decades.

Launch into my favourite theory that middle-aged women are, in fact, invisible and that no one ever knows who I am unless I have Austin standing by my side. Stuart says his wife feels exactly the same. Wonder if he recognises her if he sees her chatting to John Prescott?

When we get home Austin spends a couple of hours assembling all the gear he was given on the BBC *Style Challenge* programme. Dark grey Italian wool suit, grey shirt,

discreet grey and white tie, and navy "City gent" overcoat. Very

changing room. Smart-arse civil servant woman asks me how I can tolerate being married to man who wears ties like that! She is not joking. Tell her I wonder that myself sometimes. I am not joking.

Tie gets mention on Yesterday in Parliament.

Austin has made an important contribution to last night's debate suggesting Millennium celebrations should be relocated from Greenwich to Grimsby.

Tie appears again in Matthew Parris's *Times* column under "Grimsby or bust" headline.

World in Action producer rings to ask where he could buy a tie like that. Offer to post it to him, free.

WEDNESDAY

Tony Blair photo opportunity day. Austin up early assembling his *Style Challenge* kit. He amazes me by suggesting these events have to be taken seriously. Perhaps he really does believe there's a chance for him in New Labour.

Around lunch time I ring to see how it went. Cancelled. It will be rescheduled "in the future".

Well, that's good news then. A few weeks more freedom for us. They can't have a general election when a couple of

Continued on page 2

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Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to board a No 13 bus at Finchley Road, London NW2, obtain, by any means necessary, a ticket to take you as far as Oxford Street, and return within three hours with six bagels, a tube of Oxy-10, a fully working office-type clock housing a mono CCTV and microphone, and a camera concealed in a cigarette lighter.

If you take my advice, you will pick up the bagels at Panzer's in St John's Wood on the way back so as to get them as fresh as possible; the zit cream you can buy in Boots at Swiss Cottage. As for the surveillance equipment, well, everyone knows you can get that from Spymaster at Portman Square.

For a long time before I started shopping there regularly on my

way to work, I was intrigued by the grey frontage of Spymaster. In the same way that my local newsagent has "News-Mags-Chocolate-Fags" above the door, so Spymaster has "Counter-Surveillance-Survival Equipment-Body Armour-Night Vision".

For years, though, I never went in. When I needed, say, a light-weight anti-slab jacket or a Dedal 40 Image Intensifying Rifle Scope I just had to make it myself: I assumed that you needed some sort of cash-and-carry card issued only to 00 agents and occasionally forged by Drax operatives.

Push open their door, which is like any other door on any other shopping street, and you enter another world. "What is this thing that looks like your common or garden fuzzy drinks can (£15)? you

SERIOUS SHOPPING

COUNTER ESPIONAGE



GILES COREN

ask. And a rolling-shouldered man in his mid-20s, most unQ-like, shakes it so that you hear the fizzy drink gurgling inside, and then unscrews the top to reveal a secret compartment ideal for the storage of Semtex, microfilm, shark repellent (£30)...

He shows you the night vision equipment, and, naturally, you want to know all about the headset that you slip on to trace baddies in the dark, but he tells you that those are a bit dated now and hands you a pocketscope (£3,500). "This is the smallest second-generation night vision unit on the market. It intensifies available light by a factor of 20,000, is water-resistant

and will accept any C mount lens... Pay attention, 007! But you cannot, because in the background there are people trying out pinhole cameras that can be

disguised in a tie and calculators with hidden transmitters: "Leave it on the table at a board meeting and when you go to the loo you can listen to what they say while we are out of the room."

These people may have been trained in the identifying and disabling of malevolent agents, but what they know about calming paranoid tendencies could be invisible-inked on the back of an exploding cigar. "If you think you have a problem," says their brochure, "then you probably have."

To this end, you can sort yourself out with a telephone-tap packed in what looks like a travelling chess set (£1,250). All you

have to do is sneak up on the home of the intended victim, cut the phone line, rework it using two small crocodile clips and you're away. Unless, of course, said victim has purchased a scrambler (£500) or a voice changer (£70), which will make him sound like Metal Mickey and never hold up in court.

If you don't think you can cope with the rigours of espionage yourself, they know a man who can: "Should you suspect that you have an information leak we have a highly trained counter-team available..."

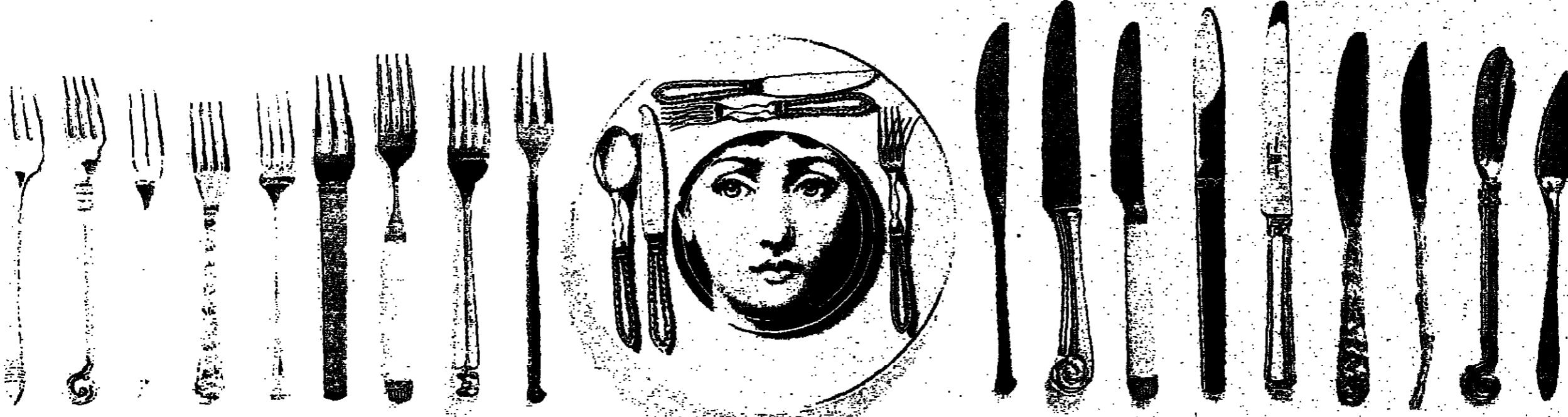
My only worry is that the man who comes to mend the leak will be more like a plumber than a double agent: a man who appears in a wet suit, peels if off to reveal a

dinner jacket, and then says, "Dear, dear... If only you'd called earlier. Best thing is to chuck it out and get a new one. Milk and two sugars if you're asking."

Much better to pick up a copy of *Sniper/Counter Sniper, or How to Disappear Completely* and DIY. Then you will need some camouflage cream, a commando wire saw, some self-healing food and jungle survival pack, and you should be able to sneak off the bus with your bagels and acne remedy concealed in the Celltronic mobile phone interceptor — it is marked as a "restricted user product: law enforcement, military, and government agencies only" — but you have clearance at the highest level. Tell them we sent you.

This column will self-destruct in ten seconds...

Cutting edge of designer cutlery



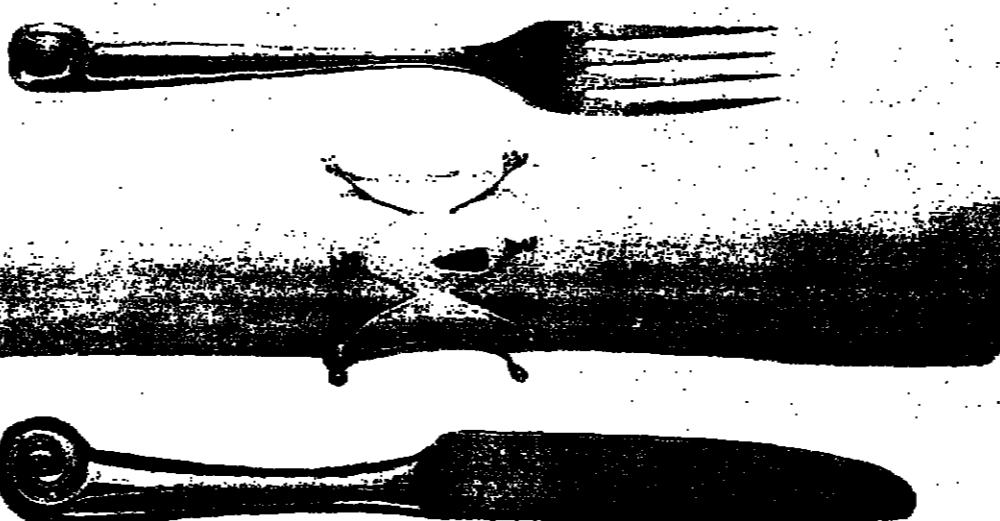
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9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

MAIN PICTURE: 1 Simple fish-head stainless steel cutlery, £2.95 for a teaspoon, £7.95 for a knife, from the Conran Shop, Michelin House, 81 Fulham Road, SW3 6RD (0171-589 7401). 2 Chunky cutlery with pewter handles "Inspired by the new South Africa", by Carol Boyes (range includes heart, wave and Aries designs), £26-£30, from Carrie Bateman Design Divine; available by mail order (0181-293 5556). 3 Twig-handled, silver-plated and brass cutlery, £4.50 for a teaspoon, £12.50 for a knife, from the Conran Shop. 4 Silver-plated cutlery with beaten design on handle, by Mayrose Boxer at Chez Joseph; six-piece setting, £25, Chez Joseph, 26 Sloane Street, SW1X 7LQ (0171-245 9493). 5 First made in the mid-1830s, "Harley" Sheffield stainless steel with a classic double reverse thread detail in the handle, seven-piece single place setting £56.85 (in silver-plate, £107.85), from Master Cutler, 3 Shepherd Street, Mayfair, W1Y 7AN (0114-272 1504).

RIGHT: "Ammonite" stainless steel cutlery designed by Robert Welch, as before Silver Jester napkin ring, £54, by Miles Tandy Griebel (0171-328 8880). Cream damask napkin (24in), £22 each, or £130 for six, from the Irish Linen Company, 35-36 Burlington Arcade, W1 (0171-493 8949).

FOR THE true gourmet, it's not only what you eat, but what you eat it with. Fortunately, etiquette no longer dictates a vast canteen of cutlery, but there's nothing more dismal than tucking into your meal with beaten-up knives and forks. Designers are now turning their attention to cutlery. SUDI PIGOTT



MAIN PICTURE: 6 For label-conscious diners, Hermès' new range of stainless steel cutlery is much heavier and larger than most sets on sale, £25 for a fork, £40 for a knife, from Hermès, 17 Sloane Street, London SW1 (0171-823 1014). 7 Cream "Carthage" cutlery with nylon handles and engraved old-silver-look detail ends, dishwasher safe; each piece £9.25, from Dilday & Jones At Home, 224-244 Regent Street, W1A 1DB (0171-734 7070). 8 "Ammonite" stainless steel cutlery designed by Robert Welch, a contemporary version, with hollow handles, of the traditional pistol-grip handle design popular since the mid-18th century; six seven-piece place settings, £300, from Robert Welch Studio Shop, Lower High Street, Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire GL55 6DY; available by mail order (01386 840522). 9 Iron Age stainless steel cutlery, six-piece place setting £75, by Mayrose Boxer from Chez Joseph, 26 Sloane Street, SW1X 7LQ (0171-245 9493).

CENTREPIECE: Formeset-designed plate, £33.70, from Rosenthal Studio House, 137 Regent Street, W1 (0171-734 3078).

Photographs: Des Jenson Styling: Caroline Griffiths

JAMES BRAZIER

Continued from page 1
hundred Labour MPs haven't got a photograph of them-selves taken with their leader.

FRIDAY

Austin phones me to say he is very ill. When I arrive home at our house in Halifax mid-evening, he is wrapped in a blanket on the sofa writing his Anti Europe, Anti EMU (and no doubt soon to be banned) election manifesto, and watching old movies on Sky. "What's for tea?" he asks between bouts of coughs and sneezes.

The kitchen is in chaos. Austin has been shopping — something which only happens when an election looms — and he wants everyone to know how involved in life he is. (You'll never guess who I saw in the supermarket today...)

SATURDAY
Surprisingly, Austin still alive, but refusing to take phone calls, particularly from Eric. Fax arrives from Eric. He absolutely must try fitting the panels on the car today.

I set out for Eric's. He lives behind Blundell Park, the football stadium. The panels are made of wood. They are about 10ft long and 4ft high.

They are painted bright scarlet and weigh a ton. The idea is to use them as a superstructure. A ferocious system of metal clamps will attach them to the car roof. Eric and I stumble into the road with one and hoist it aloft. The message is in bright yellow:

AUSTIN SAYS:
SAVE BRITAIN'S FISH
SAVE BRITAIN'S POUND!

Passing Grimsby Town fans gawp in disbelief. Eric mutters and adjusts clamps. He asks me to get into the car, open the sunroof, and stand on the driver's seat to test whether Austin will be visible above the superstructure. Believe it or not, I do this, and can just see over the top if I stand on my toes.

MONDAY
Back to London and the big day in Austin's calendar. The annual Lords and Commons photographic exhibition. Mrs Bonham has been invited to open the show. Like

• Austin suggests he and Tony should be photographed shaking hands. Art director says no. This will look like they've just met •

all of us, she has pre-election tension and giggles a lot. She speaks warmly of her talented colleagues and is presented with a video stills camera by the Kodak sponsor. Then she says mysteriously: "Many people here will know that I am married to a shopaholic, so this will be very useful." Slightly hysterical laughter from those in the know.

I am puzzled. Does this mean that she will take stills of all husband Peter's purchases to provide evidence for the Parliamentary tax inspectors in Cardiff?

WEDNESDAY
Austin is over the moon. The *Independent* has put one of his photos from the exhibition on its front page. He positively skips out of the door on his way to his long-awaited photo op with The Leader. He is going to tell Tony about our holidays plans. He is going to explain just why he needs to tell the truth about EMU in Grimsby, and why he won't be

able to endorse the party line on Europe in his campaign literature.

High noon in the Shadow Cabinet room. Tony Blair is ready and waiting. The Member for Great Grimsby, immaculate in his *Style Challenge* outfit, bubbles humorously that The Leader's suit is a bit creased. Leader consults suit doctors. Should he change? They think not.

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Eager to get something right, A suggests he and Tony should be photographed shaking hands. Art director says no. This will look like they've just met. Nervous laughs all round. Austin opens his mouth to speak, but no words will come.

The Leader smiles his big Blair smile and holds out his hand. Three handshakes, three frames of film, and it's all over.

There is now a long queue of expectant MPs laden down with props from their constituencies, brought to add a "local" feel to their election

in a smart, fitted orange jacket, short skirt and high-heeled shoes, perches nervously smiling on the edge of the frame. Wonder how many votes this will land?

I mooch off to sit in the car, and get shouted at by Austin when he returns. "This is the pre-election period you know. People might think we've had a row if you bugger off like that."

Dear John Major,
Let's have the election very soon. Please. They need me back at the office...

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OLYMPIA - MARCH 7/8/9
Evening Standard
HOMEBUYER SHOW

After surgery we head for Birmingham for a photo opportunity for Shona McLean, the Labour candidate for Cheadle Hulme. Lisa from the *Telegraph* (does she never get any time off?) arranges the group, including Austin, all dressed in jumpers and weekend trousers. Shona, the perfect Labour woman candidate



A suitable girl



RIGHT: Navy three-button jacket, £105; matching trousers, £43, Sisley, selected Benetton branches (0161-929 9250). Blue stretch boob tube, £25, No Such Soul, Hype DF (0171-937 7835). Beige thong kitten-heel shoes, £300, Jimmy Choo, to order (0171-235 6008)



ABOVE: Cream four-button jacket, £75; matching trousers £40, Warehouse, 19-21 Argyle Street, W1, and branches (0171-278 3491). Blue, choc and beige stripe cotton knit vest, £25, Jigsaw, 126-127 New Bond Street, W1, and branches (0171-491 4448)

Take John Galliano's advice: wear trouser suits for spring. They're sharp, sassy, versatile — the perfect antidote to those feminine florals



ABOVE: Pale blue crepe double-breasted jacket, £160; matching trousers, £95, Karen Millen, branches nationwide (01622 664032)

RIGHT: Brown moc-croc jacket, £79; matching trousers, £45, Kookai, 123 High Street Kensington, London W8 (0171-937 4411). Snakeskin sandals, £300, Jimmy Choo, made to order (0171-235 6008)

All photographs: William Davies
Hair/make-up: Alex Babasky
Styling: Amanda Uppal

The flipside to the ultra-feminine floral and ruffle looks around at the moment are the more sober masculine styles of women's trouser suits. Sharp and sassy, they are ideal for work or play and can be adapted for evening wear.

At work, simple, good quality T-shirts or sharp, crisp-collared blouses can be worn beneath the jacket, but do not wear cravats or ties. These were big on the catwalks this season but avoid them. As the Savile Row tailor Richard James puts it: "Any woman wearing a tie looks silly — even the Princess of Wales."

At formal events, such as a company cocktail party, Christian Dior's maverick designer John Galliano is all for a trouser suit, saying: "A bias-cut suit can look both formal and elegant." When asked about his preference for skirts or trousers, he said: "Trousers suits are the modern choice for spring."

A quick change from stiff shirt to a lace camisole, and out of your practical loafers into simple kitten-heels, can transform a day suit into evening effortlessly.

On more casual occasions, the look can be toned down with a simple, stripey, fine-knit singlet, a bra-top or a boob-tube. The more adventurous could opt to wear nothing underneath a well-lined, high-cut jacket or low-cut top.

A hint of lace on the edge of a scooped top can lift an outfit if peeking from beneath the jacket in a contrast colour — light blue under navy; beige under chocolate.

Fine crepes and wools can soften an outfit, and will keep you cool. New technology textiles, such as breathable synthetic mixes and high-sheen plastics, are youthful and add a modern edge to even the most classic of styles.

When it comes to jacket buttonings, there are no rules. Double-breasted is back but cut in softer lines, three and two-button high fastenings cover well, and a new one-button look is simple and clean.

The most important part of the suit, the trousers, tend to be slim-legged this year and, when worn with a longline jacket, are flattering to most figures. Slight bootleg kick flares can be found but will soon date. Look out for suits that come with a matching skirt for extra versatility and longer wearability.

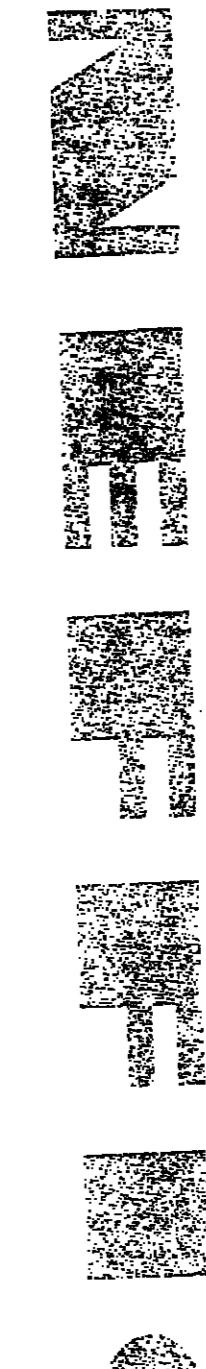
HEATH BROWN



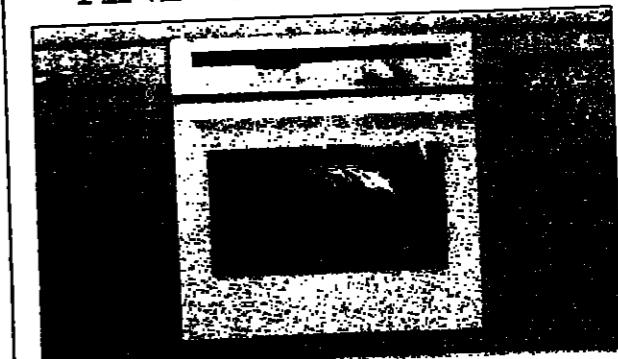
THREE OF A KIND

WITH their Seventies image, wedge-heeled shoes are making a comeback with new versions for the Nineties. These three are among the best. H.B.

ABOVE: Black suede/patent wedge, £39.99, Office, 57 Neal Street, WC2, (mail order, 0181-838 4447)



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GARDEN ANSWERS

STEPHEN ANDERTON
replies to readers' letters

Q My carrots and parsnips grow 2in-3in, then divide in up to six ways. What's the remedy? — E. Gore-Squires, Sudbury, Suffolk.

A Heavy or compacted or even waterlogged soils are the cause of this. Cultivate the soil well, adding a lot of organic matter, but not nitrogen-rich composts which can make matters worse.

Q Two years ago I had my garden relaid as an "easy-care" screed garden with a membrane under the stone. Since then, horse tails have pushed through a large area. I have used Roundup to kill it, but more keeps appearing. How do I eradicate the weed? — Mrs L. Crear, Watford, Hertfordshire.

A Geotextile membranes, designed to let water through but discourage weeds, work well but cannot suppress tough, pernicious weeds such as horse tail. Screen gardens, rockeries or any other new plantings, with or without a membrane, should never be attempted before all pernicious weeds have been eradicated. You have no choice now but to persist with the weed-killing until the site is clean. If you knew the horse tail was present, and told your contractor so, and were advised that the membrane would suppress it, you may have a case against him. See what he says.

Q Many garden centres have only a limited range of dahlia tubers and no list. Can you recommend specialist dahlia growers who have a full list? — R.C. Agombar, Salisbury, Wiltshire.

A I am tempted to say that things are improving at garden centres on the dahlia front. As the plant becomes fashionable again the range of cultivars for sale in pre-packs grows, too, though they are mostly in the dwarf, bedding end of the range. You can even buy black and scarlet 'Bishop of Llandaff' off the peg now. For a dahlia nursery, try Halls of Heddon, Heddon-on-the-Wall, Newcastle upon Tyne NE15 0JS (0161 8524415), or Oscroft's Dahlias, Sprotborough Road, Doncaster DN5 8BE (01302 783026). When looking for suppliers of a particular kind of plant, from dahlias

■ Readers should write to: Garden Answers, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington St, London E1 9XN. We regret that it may not be possible to deal with every request. Advice is offered without legal responsibility. The Times also regrets that any enclosures cannot be returned.



The window of Geoff Hewitt's flat is a mass of well-chosen colour and shapes, thanks to potted plants that stand on an outer windowsill and can be replaced as they die off

Potty ideas for your window

Are you a Mayfair minimalist or the cottage garden type? Even in dull winter months your window box can say a lot about you, says Jane Owen

What does your window box say about you? Are you a stylish Mayfair type, with ivy, clipped box balls and white cyclamen decorating the front of your house? A local worthy, sporting a selection of dwarf conifers and heathers? A devil-may-care sort, whose window box resounds with clashing pansies and cyclamen. An architectural minimalist, with stark structural pyramid-shaped box trees? Or is your style sweet and cosy with a soft mixture of blues and yellows of early daffs, hyacinths, primulas and *Iris reticulata*? Or, again, the window box announcing: "I'm very busy but restrained. The display is to restrain what a Russian vise is to slow growth."

All the styles have their merits, because they strut their stuff at this time of year when gardens can look dismal. A splash of colour at the front of a house entertains the eye and cheers the soul.

The winter display that impressed me when I lived in

London was on the windowsill of a flat opposite instead of a window box. There were a series of flower pots of various sizes, none of them fancy, growing plants rarely associated with window plantings.

In January I met the man responsible, Geoff Hewitt, a garden designer. (His real name is James Hewitt, but he prefers Geoff for obvious reasons.) His windowsill displays the kind of unusual plants that his clients refuse to accept; they want something elegant and restrained. The display is to restrain what a Russian vise is to slow growth.

Each of his plants lives in its own pot: an exotic rosette of spiky, lance-shaped leaves from *Agave americana*; the more architectural drama from the green-yellow leaves of *Phormium "Yellow Wave"*; lower-level architectural shapes from a house leek, *Senecio*; a splash of colour from the cabbage "Stockley's Red"; sunny buttercup-like flowers of the winter aconite *Eranthis hyemalis*.

reddish-green foliage of wood spurge, *Euphorbia amygdaloides* var. *robbiae*; snowdrops; beautifully cupped, green flowers of *Helleborus viridis*; lavender; cheery yellow of the dwarf *Narcissus "Tete-a-tete"*; a clump of the hairy, trailing *Thymus serpyllum*; and a pale rosette of hairy leaves made by a biennial verbascum, which will later throw up a great fury spike

dotted with yellow flowers, albeit much shorter, because of its pot-bound roots, than the normal 8in-10ft plant it would otherwise achieve.

This is the kind of planting

many people find too adventurous. Others worry about maintenance. But keeping

classically good-looking displays is straight forward: the bay, box, ivy, green-and-white look that can manage for two

or three months without any interference.

Mr Hewitt's selection of plants need more tending and the pots have to be moved about as each plant reaches its climax as one plant passes its best it can be replaced in an instant.

When part of a window box display goes over it has to be dug into, disrupting neighbouring plants which have to be closely planted for the best effect.

"I don't hesitate to move the pots about frequently and I take out any plant as soon as it is past its best. What I aim for at all times is a structure, body and interest. But you have to keep the pots simple or they start to compete with the plants," says Mr Hewitt, who came to Britain in 1987 after two years on a flower farm in his native Tasmania, and worked for a while at the London nursery Cliftons, and then as a gardener at a country house before setting up his garden design firm.

He warns against using small pots or mixing the

■ Encourage dormant fuchsias and pelargoniums into growth with a sparing application of water. Plant dry begonia tubers in cool, moist seed compost, to initiate root growth.

■ Feed apples, pears and plum trees with nitrogen and potassium fertiliser. Prune stone fruit trees as growth begins.

■ Plant Jerusalem artichokes in deep. Greengrocer's tubers are perfectly good but, for less knobby tubers and easier peeling, plant a reliable named variety from a horticultural supplier.

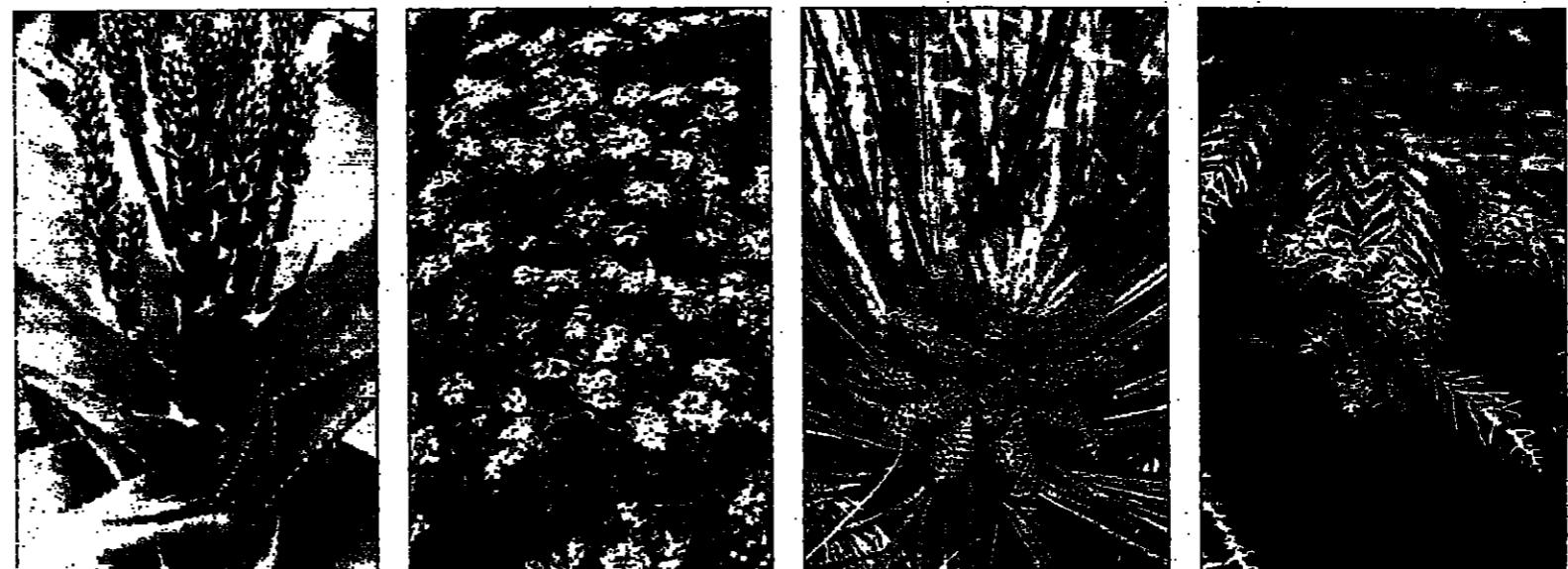
■ Shallots may be planted now.

■ Check bedding wallflowers for wind rock, and ensure that they are all firm in the ground.

■ Divide early-leaving perennials, such as pulmonarias and brunnera.

WEEKEND TIPS

Buying plants after a frozen winter needs care. Stephen Anderton tells how to spot wrong 'uns

Left to right: the rosette *Aloe suarezensis*, corkscrewing *Viburnum tinus* and *Pinus radiata*, and the conifer *Cryptomeria japonica "Elegans"*

Dead giveaways for sick plants

always quick to die, and a plant may only become brown all over, sometimes in a few days, when the weather begins to warm up in spring. Yew, especially, has a habit of saving its death rattle until April or May.

Bronzing is another matter. There are conifers, such as the leathery *Cryptomeria japonica "Elegans"*, whose foliage turns a plummy purple or bronze in cold weather. This is entirely natural and has a measure of attraction. Other conifers, including yew, may show purpling of the leading shoots. But it is brownness which is to be avoided.

When buying an evergreen, it's wise

to turn it out of its pot to check the roots. The tips should be white and healthy, and have a good grip on the compost. Plants whose roots have spiralled at the bottom of the pot have been potted for too long anyway. Buy them if you must, but they will require teasing out of the corkscrew and spreading out in the planting hole.

Sometimes this is impossible, and root pruning is the only answer.

Corkscrewing of roots is less important on some evergreens than others. Broad-leaved evergreens, such as *Vaccinium tinus* and laurel, have fibrous roots and a dome-shaped canopy, and can overcome a congested rootball by

themselves in time. But in a fast-growing shelter tree, such as *Pinus radiata*, corkscrew roots should be avoided at all costs. They need efficient horizontal roots to hold themselves up and take the force of the wind. Staking a pine with a corkscrewed root is only putting off the evil day when it blows down or hurtles over.

When buying herbaceous plants after a freeze, look for swelling buds in the crown of the plant, and be suspicious of plants in leaf out in waterlogged compost: they ought to be using that water if the plant is alive.

Sour, stinking compost is a sure sign of dead roots.

Rosette plants with a single central root like a dandelion, are prone to rot away in wet and cold. Sometimes the rosette of foliage remains firm when the roots have rotted off at the neck. So pull gently to see if the rosette has a firm hold in the pot. If it is going to lift off like a mob-cap, it is better to know before you buy and get it home.

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During last month's cold weather I visited a garden centre in Cambridge, where I was pleased to see some plants erected over the banks of potted plants outdoors to keep the worst of the cold off them, as well as the snow.

In bitter weather, pots are best grouped close together — pot-thick as nurserymen call it — to reduce the chill to their roots. And, the nearer to the ground the better: plants on any kind of a raised bench are going to get colder than those on the ground.

Sometimes it is hard to tell if a plant is alive or dead when you buy it. Conifers, whose foliage has been browned, should be avoided. The chances are that they have been burned by the cold or wind when unable to draw moisture from a frozen rootball. Conifers are not

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Corsham Court, by Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton



Castle with a carpet of snowdrops

OPEN THIS WEEKEND

■ **Corsham Court, Corsham, Wiltshire (01249 701610).**

On A4, four miles west of Chippenham. Open Jan-Mar, Sat-Sun, 2-4.30pm; Apr-Oct, daily except Mon (open Bank hol), 11am-5.30pm, £2; children £1.

This is a garden of note, having been created by Capability Brown and his successor, Humphrey Repton. Corsham was also one of the projects where Brown was responsible for the house: he carried out extensive alterations and additions to the Elizabethan original, which survives facing the entrance courtyard. Brown's work was followed by further architectural changes, but the impressive picture gallery he designed contin-

ues to display one of England's foremost picture collections. Set in parkland to the east of the house is the lake that Brown planned, but never executed, and Repton carried out. To one side, however, is Corsham's gem, the Gothic bathhouse that Brown designed and built, and which ranks among the elite of English garden buildings.

■ **Chirk Castle gardens.**

Chirk, Wrexham, north Wales (01691 77770).

Off A5 west of Chirk, eight miles from Oswestry. Open today and tomorrow, noon-5pm (last admission 3.30pm). Then Mar 26-Sep 28, daily except Mon and Tues (open Bank hol). Oct, Sat-Sun, 11am-5pm

(last admission 4.30pm). Feb weekends £1, children 50p. Later, £2.20, children £1.10.

The great Marches castle, perched on a hill, was clearly built for defence rather than comfort. It is only since the 18th century that its surroundings have been softened with parkland and gardens, whose most impressive decorative feature greets you at the entrance - a superb wrought iron screen and gates made in the 18th century by the Davies blacksmith brothers. From the lawn to one side of the castle, an opening in great, old yew hedges beckons to a long, grassy walk which is the heart of the garden. At the far end, a terrace presents spectacular views over the

English border. At this time of year, the feature is the number of snowdrops here and in the large woodland garden.

■ **Wolerton Park, Eppingham, Norfolk (01263 584175).**

Two miles north of Aylsham, via A140. Open daily all year, 9am-5pm. Car park £2.

Wolerton, on a crisp winter or early spring day, exemplifies the spaciousness of the 18th-century parks in Norfolk, cradle of England's agricultural revolution at that time. It is a place to walk and think back to the 1730s, when the elegant house was built by Horatio Walpole whose brother, Sir Robert, had recently completed work at

Houghton Hall across the county. The present Lord Walpole is carrying out restoration. A ruined church tower provides a focal point for walks through the park, as well as an attractive note that would have certainly met the approval of Wolerton's original owner. Magnificent spreading oak trees add natural scale to the enormous park, towards which the house faces over a suitably extensive lake. The garden close to the house is open on selected days in summer (telephone for details), but Lord Walpole's main home nearby, Manningtree Hall, is even more worthy of a summer visit for its outstanding collection of roses.

GEORGE PLUMPTRE

Wolerton Park, Eppingham, has fine oaks and an impressive lake



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Pye Corner's traditional frontage hides interior flights of fancy

The house at Pye Corner

The mullioned windows of this Cotswold home suggest a country idyll but it's not all chintz inside

Driving through the Cotswold village of Broadway, even the most seasoned nomad should feel a sense of homecoming, even if the "home" in question is one of childhood fancy. Joanne Trollope, car ads and Sunday night television murder mysteries.

Once named the "showcase village of England", Broadway boasts the usual table-mat scenes: golden stone, leaded windows, rambling hills and peaceful, walled gardens.

The Worcestershire village is best known by the older generation as the home of the late car-crazy parliamentarian Sir Gerald Nabarro, and by younger couples for the Lygon Arms Hotel: the perfect venue for weekend breaks and discreet affairs.

At first sight, the House at Pye Corner conforms to this idyll, transporting you to a fictional past where small boys wear horn-rimmed spectacles, scrum for apples and eat steaming pies; a time when village teashops with jangly doors serve buns from doily-lined cake stands, and humble country folk hold hands and sing carols around the tree.

Pye Corner sits on the edge of the village, on what is thought to be the previous owner's flights of fancy: aesthetic no-hos. Walking into the music room from the traditionally beamed hall is like discovering Top Shop in the basement of Harvey Nichols. Restored by Christopher Boult, muralist to the

original Broadway, believed to date from the 17th and late 18th century, the house is approached by a sweeping driveway leading to a courtyard and side entrance. Peering through the stone-mullioned windows from outside, welcoming wood fires burn in the grates, casting a wonderful orange light on chamfered and stopped beams. Once inside, heavy oak doors scream to be hid behind, and cold quarry tiles insist that you remember your slippers.

The previous owner, the former managing director of Endsleigh Insurance, died last year. He had definite ideas about restoration and redecoration, and on closer inspection his personal touches break with the chocolate-box idyll.

Pye Corner is about as far from an urban interior design as you can go, crammed full of idiosyncrasies (at engravings on the inglenook, an antique four-poster positioned next to a 1970s laminated table).

It is fair to say that many of the previous owner's flights of fancy are aesthetic no-hos. Walking into the music room from the traditionally beamed hall is like discovering Top Shop in the basement of Harvey Nichols. Restored by Christopher Boult, muralist to the

The chocolate-box image is dispensed with in the music room, where murals tell the story of Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène* and cherubs adorn the ceiling. Above: the hallway

stars, painted panels tell the story of Offenbach's *La Belle Hélène*. A painterly slide show charts the life of Helen of Troy, from the Invocation to Venus and The Seduction through to The Judgement. The smudged faces of women with the vital statistics of oversized Cindy dolls smile warmly from the walls.

On the painted ceiling, unfairly well-endowed cherubs wink at gild-heavy mirrors reflect the lavish *trompe l'oeil*. The spectacle is enough to make the most dedicated voyeur reach for the Arax.

More in keeping is the fine working kitchen along the hall with traditional terracotta tiled flooring. A gas-fired Aga provides focus, warmth and the promise of hotpot and rice pudding. The previous

owner was a compulsive picker and the pantry is piled high with pots and bell jars ready to preserve fruit and vegetables from the garden. The breakfast room has built-in antique cabinets for ample storage and the dining room is spacious and smart with polished wood floors and an inglenook fireplace.

The drawing room, at the back of the house, has wall timbers, a built-in window seat and a French door to the terrace which looks out over the garden. An open stone fireplace carries a plaster mould of its maker (a local builder who has entered village lore). His full face, pipe and flat cap jut out from the stone canopy.

Upstairs there are six bedrooms

and three bathrooms. The master bedroom has been recently redecorated. The wallpaper and pea-green paintwork was not to my taste, but it is a good size, with beautiful views of the orchard and the rolling Cotswold hills.

A smaller, darker bedroom at the back of the house has a minstrel's gallery, accessible only by ladder: the first place to check when playing hide-and-seek.

Pye Corner has staggering potential. The spacious attics in the eaves cry out to be made into studios, workshops or teenagers' bedrooms. The stables and outbuildings have lain idle for years. To the side of the house lie empty greenhouses and

an intriguing wood store which looks like a hybrid mix of Canadian log cabin and well-built Wendy house.

The two-and-a-half-acre garden is a mishmash of traditional Cotswold and oriental fantasy. Well-kept lawns at the front hint that the gardens have been lovingly restored to their former glory, with bursting flower beds and finely pruned topiary. Yet a half-finished balustrade cuts through the green at the back, signifying the start of the ambitious Japanese-style sunken garden, which reminded me of something Norris McWhirter might have knocked up, complete with ornamental water plants, bridge and fountain.

At the back a productive vegeta-

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

Pye House Corner, Broadway

• Price: £700,000
• Shopping: Felicity Kendal it, with greens in the vegetable garden and fruit in the orchard, or visit the local farm shop for pickled beetroot, separated yoghurt and warm eggs. Tuesday is market day in Moreton-in-Marsh, Cheltenham or Stratford to satisfy urban needs.

• Travel: Main line rail service from Moreton-in-Marsh (eight miles) to London taking 1½ hours. There is a local taxi company in the village. Entertainment: Horseracing at Cheltenham and Worcester, sip brandy at North Cotswolds hunt meets, polo at Cirencester Park and golf at Broadway. Theatres at Stratford, Cheltenham and Oxford.



ble and flower garden with a peach arch, fruit canes, strawberry, asparagus and vegetable beds.

The heated swimming pool is well secluded, perfect for weekend parties. Change in the summerhouse, bring out the sun-loungers, shake up some large Martinis and duck and dive in the natural spring water, pumped up from the well.

On the way home, I thought about the doves twinkling in the winter sun and developed an urge to load up my imaginary Volvo with family and friends, return to Pye Corner with gloves and apron and start pruning.

ALEX O'CONNELL
• Agents: Hamptons in Broadway (01386 85205).

HOME SWAP

£185,000

This two-bedroom 19th-century lodge house in Blackheath, south-east London, can be yours for £185,000. Agents: Winkworth 0808 852 0595.

£179,000

For slightly less (£179,000) you could buy Bag End, a charming 17th-century four-bedroom detached stone cottage with two acres of garden and paddocks, in Gilling East, North York. Agents: Savills 01904 620733.

£180,000

In the Tarn et Garonne, southwest France, the same sort of money (£180,000) will stretch to a fully restored (Juliette Binoche stone) farmhouse in 2.5 acres of garden with a swimming pool and a barn for conversion. The six-bedroom, three-bathroom, four-reception room house comes fully furnished and equipped for 12 people, with beautiful views over open countryside. Agents: Domus Abroad, 0171 432 4682.

CHERYL TAYLOR

Retro living in Seventies heaven

Angie Smith enjoys being in a time warp — her flat is a museum of Biba memorabilia, down to the coffee mugs

Evering Angie Smith's flat in Belmont Green is a bit like stepping into a film set for *The Avengers* with a few props from *George and Mildred*. Angie is tall and slim with jet-black hair, and usually wears heavy black eye make-up and striking, original Biba clothes.

"My work is not particularly creative so I tend to take out my artistic tendencies on my flat," says Angie. The late Sixties and early Seventies were the best times of my life. This was a really period, the time for entertaining friends and when *Playboy* was a big influence. It was a decade of go-go girls, Kubrik, sports cars and *Cointreau* — the "me" generation. My favourite year was 1970 and I am happy to live it all the time."

Her collection began when she was 15. The main inspiration was her father, who was a dustman in a wealthy area at the time when punk had just taken hold. The Sixties and Seventies look had become very fashionable and Angie's father regularly brought home Seventies lamps, artefacts, records and pointed bras on the "special dartboard". Over the years she has acquired one of the largest personal collections of Biba artefacts and clothes in the country and hires them out to film companies.

A few years ago it was fairly easy to find Biba products and other Seventies decor cheaply in markets and second-hand shops. Now a lot of the pieces, such as the tall, curvy Carlton Ware coffee sets and the brightly coloured shatterproof Perspex coasters and lamp bases, have become collectable and expensive.

Charity shops and car boot sales are still a good source for Seventies style, and although it has become more popular, it is still possible to pick up block

print curtains, swirly wallpaper and distinctive furniture from that era.

Angie has devoted a lot of her time to the design of her flat. "I have created an environment that I am proud of. It is very personal as I have thought hard about every object and every piece of carpet.

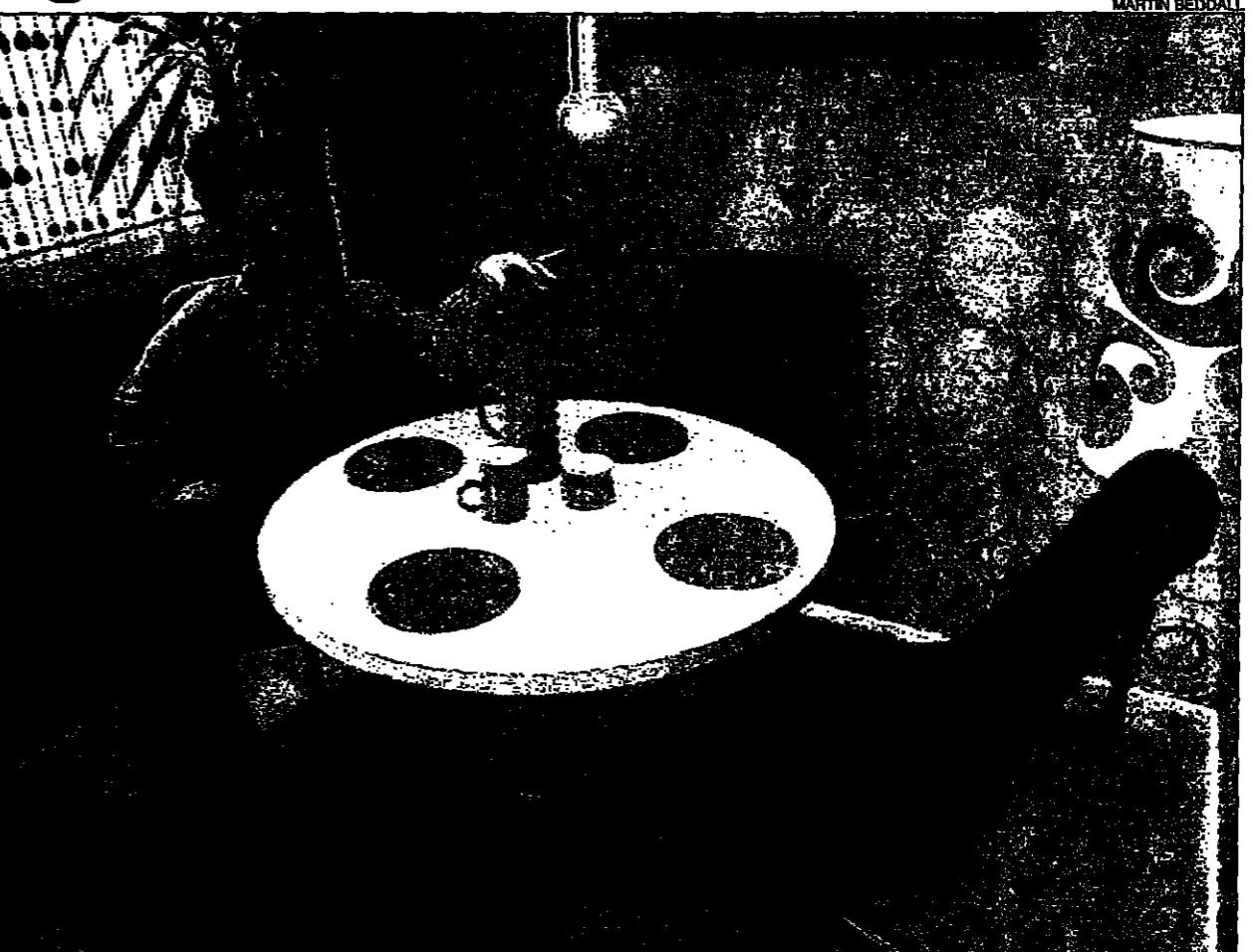
"Nowadays, people don't seem to think about textures or look at a piece of furniture in isolation, but tend to go for an overall look from the pages of an interiors magazine. Too many people in this country

have become scared of colour and have hint-of-tint walls with tiny bits of colour such as bright red coffee mug.

It is a bit tricky to match scary colours such as purples and reds as they need to have the same tone, but it is great when you achieve the look you want.

I have tried to create a different feel for each room — I like each room to say 'hello' to me.

The overall look is heavily researched and Angie watches period films and reads many books on decorating and collecting Seventies items. She feels it is important to find books that have photos of a house being lived in rather than just showing pieces of furniture. Old copies of *House*



"My favourite year was 1970 and I'm happy to live it all the time," says Angie, who started collecting when she was 15

and Garden (available from specialist magazine shops) have proved useful for showing a Seventies house in context. Most houses in the Seventies would still have had pieces from the Sixties and even the Fifties as people did

not go out and buy a complete new range of furniture. The sitting room achieves the look of the day with plenty of chrome and glass. The walls are painted beige with tobacco and orange stripes and are decorated with beaten-copper pictures.

The curtains have a bold print of brown and black swirls, and a swinging cane "egg" chair hangs from the ceiling. In the corner is Angie's favourite piece of furniture, a knee-high, orange cylindrical cocktail cabinet. It has holes for the bottles and can be wheeled around at a party with the top being used to hold glasses and canapés.

Through the red, glass-bead door you enter the kitchen with its solid, curved 1953 fridge. Much of the rest of the room pays homage to the Biba food hall. There are mugs, trays and tins, a large array of

jars that once held everything from chickpeas to bicarbonate of soda, all in the distinctive black and gold that Biba used for its logo and motifs. On the walls are the labels from the Biba quicks boxes (one from each of the ten varieties).

The bedroom is designed to have the sensuous, velvety feel of a boudoir. The walls are covered in purple hessian, which has not proved practical as the cat loves to climb the walls and tends to shred it.

The dressing table is completely covered with pots of Biba lotions, shampoo and make-up, including silver face and body paint which was fashionable at the time.

The cupboards are jammed with original Biba outfit (248 pieces). These range from heavy satin nightdresses and hot pants to a flimsy, empire-line wedding dress and a fake

leopard-skin trouser suit. Floppy hats with flowers cover the walls and cupboards. The only room which has yet to receive the treatment is the bathroom. This has proved difficult because bathroom equipment and tiles tend to break and get thrown away when they are taken out of a house. Angie is, however, currently negotiating for a purple bathroom suite.

Angie sadly concedes that she has almost completed the design of her flat.

"The cupboards are overflowing with wallpaper and curtains. I suppose my dream would be to win the lottery and carry on with my collection. I would buy a big Georgian house in Holland Park or Notting Hill and paint it purple on the outside with a turquoise door and window sills."

JOYCE BLAKE



The smallest room in the house is a loo with attitude

The Chinese art of creating harmonious homes may be all the rage but it is important to choose advisers carefully

PALE COUSINS

Beware feng shui phooey

David and Alice wanted a baby. They consulted the doctor but they did not see any harm in consulting a feng shui practitioner too. He came to see, he put up a windchime. The couple, now £50 poorer, waited for their lives to become richer.

Nothing happened, however, so they called on Tony Holdsworth of the Midlands Feng Shui Centre in Etington near Stratford-upon-Avon. He said: "I went with a Chinese master and the windchime was in the wrong place and it was reducing energy when it needed increasing. There was nothing other than a workshop in the area of creativity, and no improvements or suggestions had been made. The real problem was an underground burst sewage pipe in that area. That has been fixed but there is no news yet."

This couple were victims of feng shui phooey and they are not the only ones who have paid good money for bad advice in this trendiest of disciplines. The West has fallen in love with the Chinese art, which focuses on the way buildings and interior design affect the well-being and prosperity of the inhabitants. In Britain the trend for creating harmonious homes has gone from New Age fringe to mainstream, with even the likes of Wimpey handing out free guides on the subject.

But this month feng shui is growing up in Britain with two new schools that aim to provide standards and structure for a field that so far has been dominated by the feel-good factor. At last, time is running out for the charlatans and their phooey.

"This kind of course is a must," says Gina Lazenby of the Feng Shui Network in London. "At first there was just a growing awareness of what feng shui is. You know, the 'Gosh, I've got my toilet in the wealth corner and all my money is being flushed away' type of thing. But the awareness is way beyond that now and we need people who know what they are doing and who are professional."

This is easier said than done. Chinese masters select their pupils, who can train for decades before becoming masters. "They would learn throughout their lifetime but cannot practise until they are almost drawing a pension," Ms Lazenby says.

Britain has the opposite problem.

FACT FILE

A FENG SHUI consultant will charge from £150 for a small flat to £250 to £350 for the average home, depending on size and location. This is not cheap and arranging a consultation should be approached in the same spirit that you would hire a specialist lawyer or accountant.

■ Most feng shui practitioners are found by word of mouth. Another option would be to ring the Feng Shui Network which can refer you to a consultant.

■ Ask how long your consultant has been practising and how they were trained. Ask for references and follow them up.

■ At no point should you feel as if the wool is being pulled over your eyes. Gina Lazenby of the Feng Shui Network advises that no one should hire a practitioner they do not feel right about.

■ Chanting and robes may be fine, but feng shui consultants should also show an awareness of electromagnetic stress, geopathic stress (what is going on underneath your house) and look at the street layout and the outside of your house.

■ The practitioner should ask about you and your life (including your birth date) and also show an interest in the history of the house and who lived there before.

■ Some consultants use a Chinese compass or *lo pan* and some do not. If you want a traditional Oriental practitioner, employ someone who uses a *lo pan*. If you are not sure, ask the practitioner about it. Do not let anyone blind you with the science of it.

■ If the practitioner gives you a list of changes, ask about them.



Derek Walters, a feng shui expert, rearranges his garden

Involving yourself in the process gives you more understanding of what is going on.

■ Lots of people expect feng shui to solve all their problems overnight but in many cases changes are not made all at once.

■ If you make the changes and

nothing happens or things get worse, ring your practitioner. Gina Lazenby believes most problems stem from poor communication. The practitioner should be happy to discuss the situation and to make further suggestions.

few years, has experienced the boom in the subject first hand with the phones "going crazy". Some 10,000 calls later, she decided the time was right to use her contacts to set up a "professional" course.

Ms Lazenby says feng shui is not a purely Oriental practice. "I see it not as a Chinese thing but as something that is universal. I want to see how we can use it in England, in Scotland, in our semi-detached houses, in our cottages. The *lo pan* compass takes a long time to learn. But there is another way of doing it which is based on intuition. Neither is wrong or right."

Her course, to be held in central London, includes teachers from Australia and America and covers such diverse subjects as electromagnetic stress, feng shui in the kitchen, and children.

"It has to have real value and not be just a few cheap courses put together. I have to balance credibility, professionalism and affordability," she says.

The course involves 50 classes over two to three years. It will cost from £5,000 to £7,000 and graduates may become eligible to go on to the network's consultant registry.

"When this field becomes regulated — and it will be one day — then we will need information in filing cabinets and case studies to show we have done our homework," Ms Lazenby says.

Any consultant worth his or her £150 a session should bring a wealth of experience to your home. They should be knowledgeable about Chinese astrology, geopathic stress and ask lots of questions about the history of your house and your life. Ideally, they will bring you into the process and be available afterwards for follow-up.

"If you have a question, ring them up," Ms Lazenby says. "It's in nobody's interest for something to be half-done." Unfortunately, some, like David and Alice, have learned that the hard way.

ANN TREMENAN

● Details of Gina Lazenby's course are available from the Feng Shui Network International, PO Box 2133, London W1A 1RL (0171-935 8935).

● For information on Tony Holdsworth's programme, contact the School of Feng Shui, Vocational Training Course, 34 Banbury Road, Etington, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire CV37 7SU (01295 740116).



A Chinese cabinet placed to link dining and living rooms

The number of feng shui consultants here has leaptfrogged from a handful several years ago to up to 50 or more. Some are not experienced enough to be practising and it is instructive that the Feng Shui Network only has ten consultants on its books that it will recommend. Tony Holdsworth is even more selective, believing that only a few practitioners here have the expertise to practise.

The reason behind this difference of opinion lies in the nature of feng shui and how some have adapted it

to Western ways. Mr Holdsworth is a purist, believing that the only proper feng shui is the Oriental kind based on the use of the Chinese compass or *lo pan*. His course, which he calls "vocational", is made up of nine weekend sessions at the Midland centre over a year and costs £998. An advanced course is being planned for next year.

Its main lecturer is consultant Derek Walters, an authority on Chinese culture and the author of many books including *The Feng*

Shui Handbook. There is a real need for this. I teach a similar course in Germany and have advanced students there," Mr Walters says. "They show me examples of their practical work and they know more about feng shui than others who are charging and working as consultants in Britain."

Like many in Britain, Ms Lazenby stumbled on feng shui by accident when she took a course from William Spear, the American guru of "intuitive feng shui". She

set up the network and, in the past



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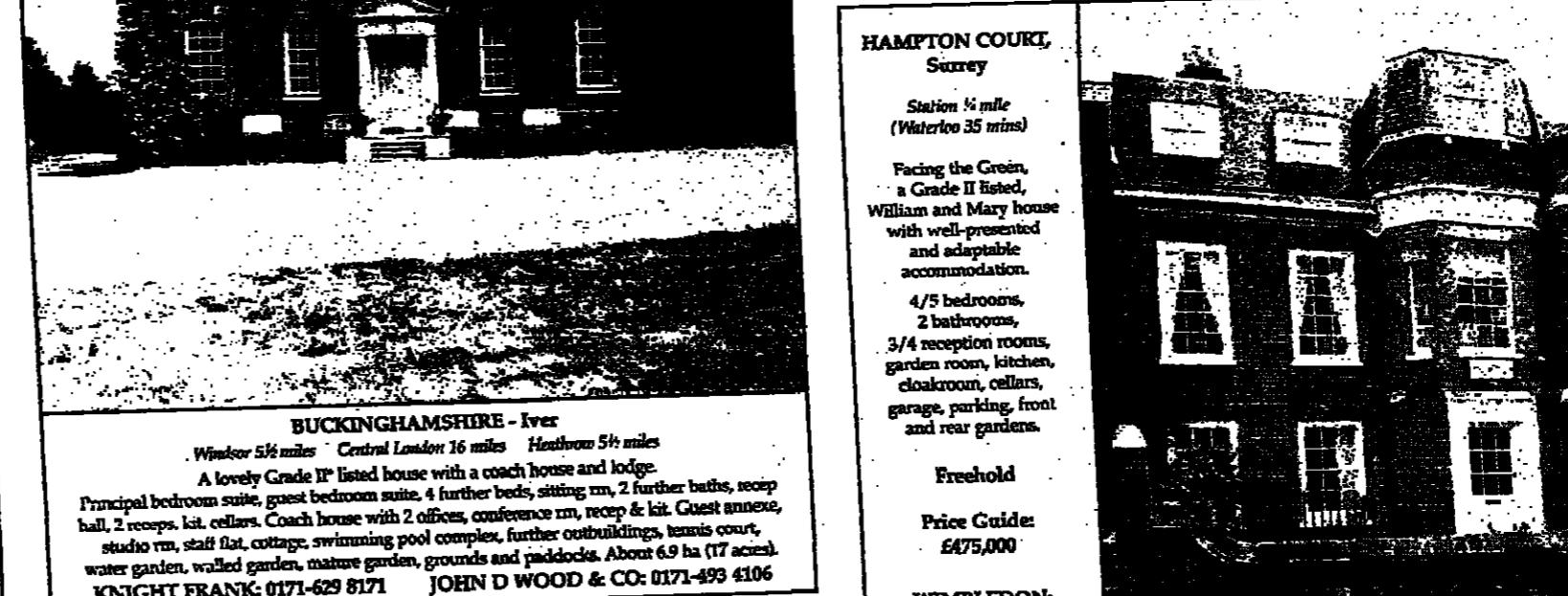
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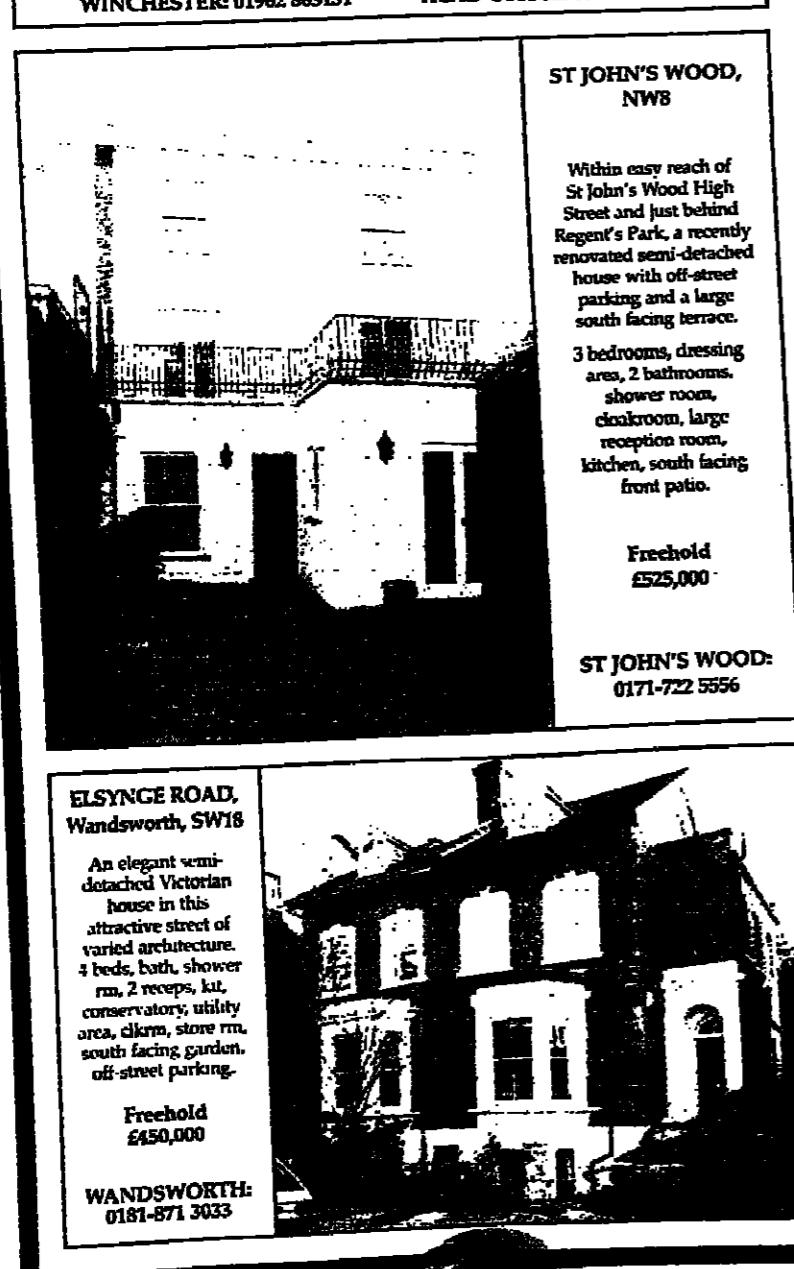


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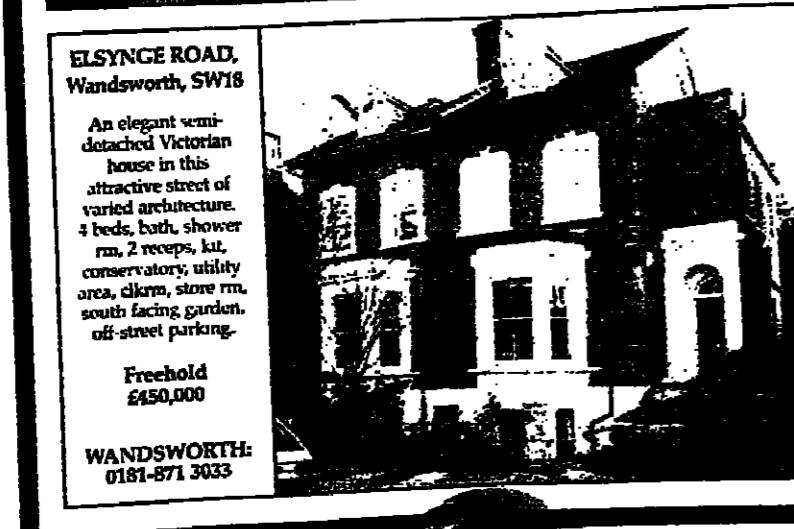


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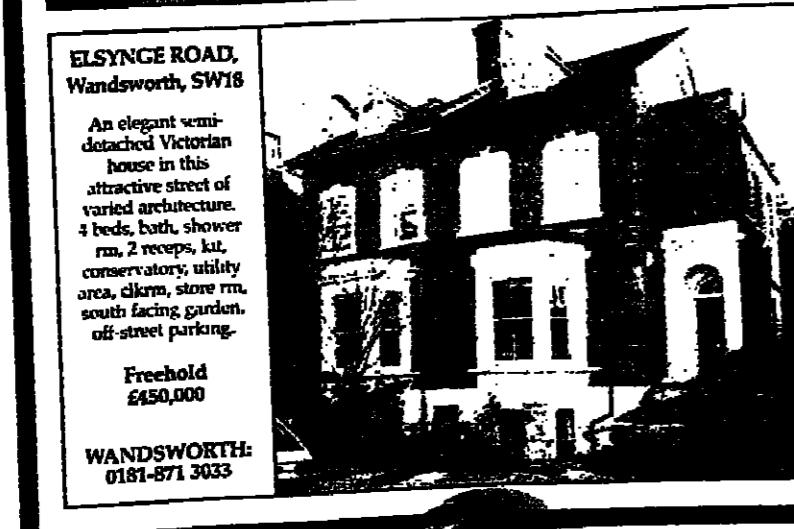


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THE BEAUX-ARTS BUILDING

Unless we're careful, sheep will start rounding up shepherds, pheasants will refuse to fly, and pigs will succeed in doing so

Somewhere on a laboratory shelf in America sits a drug which could devastate country life as we know it. It has been developed with those good intentions with which we all know the road to hell is paved. May I suggest that what hell will be like?

This group of drugs offers hope in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. No problem there. But a report in this newspaper last week said, "scientists believe that these memory pills will also lift normal performance to super-normal levels". And here is the chilling bit: "Animals given the drugs have shown remarkable improvements in learning." Aaargh! What have they done? Have they fed this stuff to Mickey Mouse and turned him into Mastermind Mouse? I think we should be told, for the implications are dire.

It is worth remembering that the balance of power which exists between us and animals, seen at its most raw in the countryside and on the farm, exists only because, when it comes to knowing how many beans make five, we get right more times than they do. We are cleverer, and so in the end we win. For example,

That's enough brains, thank you

there is an easy and foolproof way to move a pig from A to B. The farmer starts at A, alongside the pig, with a brimming bucket of feed in his hand, and walks slowly towards B, where he puts the bucket on the ground. It is beyond the realms of possibility that the pig will not eventually shift its stubborn self towards B. If B was the trailer in which you wanted to catch it, so much the better. It will always work because the pig, though brighter than some animals, has no understanding of patience and how that of the farmer's will ultimately evaporate if kept waiting too long. All it understands are the pleasures of dining.

So imagine what country life would be like if animals and birds get hold of this superdrug from some waste source or other, develop superior mental powers and start to think things through.

I can foresee a time when, instead of responding to the scare tactics of beaters at shoots, the pheasants would stub-

bornly sit on the ground and say boo to the guns. They would be entirely safe. Horse riding would cease to be a pleasure, because the new-found wits of the animal would enable it to work out that if it did not fancy trotting the lanes that day, it did not have to. This would result in a new breed of servile owner-taking their mounts

curls of morning tea to get them in a compliant mood. Shepherding would come to an end, because sheep would soon learn that they could run rings around men with crooks even more than they do now. On second thoughts, scrub that; no one is suggesting a drug so

powerful as to give sheep the powers of reasoning; pigs might fly first — which, of course, they could if they put their new, souped-up minds to it. Most frightening is the thought that the animals' superbrains might decide that, if we enjoy a roast slice of meat, where does that leave the brainpower of the innocent cow? Higher or lower on the scale than those who drew up the regulations, allowed the loophole, did very little about it for a very long time, and then put healthy animals to the torch for "political reasons"?

that this disease was created by defying the cow's natural instincts not to eat meat, where does that leave the brainpower of the innocent cow? Higher or lower on the scale than those who drew up the regulations, allowed the loophole, did very little about it for a very long time, and then put healthy animals to the torch for "political reasons"?

Clearly, compared with the present and previous ministers of agriculture, the cow has already got the edge when it comes to brainpower. After all, given a choice, no cow would ever choose to eat the brains of a dead sheep.

I am indebted to the *New Farmer and Grower* magazine — required reading for those who doubt organic is the way forward in farming — for reminding us that as long ago as 1923 the philosopher Rudolph Steiner wrote: "Consider a cow or an ox ... What would happen if the ox were to eat meat directly instead

of plants ... The ox would go crazy." Those who say the BSE crisis was unforeseen have the written proof that it was not. Steiner says: "If an experiment could be made in which a herd of oxen were suddenly fed with pigeons, it would produce a completely mad herd of oxen." You do not have to be a veterinarian to see the common sense in it.

Imagine a field of sheep and cows together, and a ewe dies. Does the cow gallop straight over and savage it, as would a hungry dog or a fox? No, it has the intelligence to work out that grass is better for it and, given a free rein, will always eat what is safe for it to do so.

There is a toxic weed called ragwort which kills all livestock if digested, but it is rare for cows to graze it. They know, they have brains; more brains than those who thought they knew better and arrogantly assumed that the cow's instinct counted for very little.

So here is my plea. Let us have this superdrug for all the benefits to memory and reasoning that it will bring. But do not try it out on the animals first. As last Monday's debate proved, there are far more urgent cases.

DOWN TO EARTH



PAUL HEINEY

the realms of science fiction, I refer you to the events in the House of Commons last Monday, where the Minister of Agriculture was censured for the Government's handling of the BSE crisis.

It was a good row, but we are none the wiser. If it eventually comes to be proven



Esmé Kirby with her husband Peter at their farm, "The Valley of Many Streams": between them they have protected landmarks, cleared eyesores, planted trees, designed and built bridges and stiles, and created paths

Welsh squirrels beware

Esmé Kirby, octogenarian protector of Snowdonia's charms, has her sights firmly set on a new target, says Derwent May

In a quiet valley in north Wales, an 80-year-old lady is masterminding a plan to reduce the numbers of magpies and grey squirrels in Snowdonia — and indeed beyond its borders. Her name is Esmé Kirby, and she lives on a farm above the River Gwydyr, which flows east from the foothills of Snowdon to Capel Curig.

She has been campaigning for Snowdonia all her life, and now she has a new purpose. She is appalled by the way the magpies raid the nests of chaffinches and other small birds in the farmhouse gardens, and believes their numbers have been much reduced as a result.

As for grey squirrels, they undoubtedly do a great deal of harm, both to birds and to trees in gardens and forests, and may have helped drive out red squirrels from much of Britain, which is Mrs Kirby's main concern. Apart from keeping them down on the mainland, Mrs Kirby and the conservation body she has set up, the Esmé Kirby Snowdonia Trust, have an ambitious plan to eliminate grey squirrels in the isle of Anglesey, and replace them with red squirrels.

For £5 the trust will send detailed instructions for making a humane squirrel trap. This is a simple construction consisting of a wooden tunnel with a board that drops behind the squirrel and traps it when it comes in for the bait. Also for £5, the trust will send anyone a pack containing instructions, and the essential metal springs, for building a Larsen trap to catch magpies. This needs wire netting as well as wood, but is also simply made. It uses a decoy bird, which other magpies will come down to investigate — and then a door springs shut behind them. About 200 magpie traps have been dispatched by the end of last year. (Of course, you have to give the captives a smart blow on the head once you have caught them.)

Mrs Kirby has done much to protect the beauties of Snowdonia and establish better public access to them. In her time, she has prevented the renowned Cromlech Boulders in the Llanberis Pass beneath Snowdon from being blown up during road-widening; has

cleared a vast dump of old fridges, cookers and mattresses that lay in a rural quarry above Dolgellau and resown it with mountain ash trees and recently has opened to walkers an eight-mile path through bracken and across streams on the mountainside she owns above her house.

Her farm is called Dyrifyn Mymbyr ("The Valley of Many Streams"), and she and her husband, Peter, live in a sturdy stone farmhouse with a few trees around it, a bird table where peregrine falcons come regularly to feed, and Snowdon visible through the kitchen window on a clear day.

It is from Dyrifyn Mymbyr that she manages her Snowdonia Trust, the successor to another body that she founded almost 30 years ago, the Snowdonia National Park Society, which still exists but goes its own way without her.

Even the story of how she came to the mountain is a romantic one.

Before the Second World War, as a young woman, she ran a riding school in Llanidloes, which in those days was the town where all the Manchester cotton-brokers had their homes. A young man named Thomas Firbank, who was a nephew of the writer Ronald Firbank, had bought the farm of Dyrifyn Mymbyr as an adventure, though he did not know much about farming. Later he was to write a very successful book about it called *I Bought a Mountain*. He saw Esmé in Llanidloes and carried her off to the farm as his bride. Unfortunately, the marriage did not last long, but Thomas gave his young wife the farm. She has been there ever since, and farmed it on her own for more than 40 years, though it now has a Welsh tenant

Peregrine falcons regularly appear to feed at her bird table

world have been making donations since then. She has numerous friends through the years who have made at the famous climbing hotel just down the road, the Pen-y-Gwyrd Hotel (where we had some splendid mountain lamb for dinner), and by the end of 1995 her supporters had brought the trust's funds up to £40,000. Time to start work again, she thought.

The first year's achievements included the public opening of the mountain path by the athlete Sir Chris Brasher, the repair — with the help of Forest Enterprise and Gwynedd County Council — of a boggy section of another mountain path near Trawsfynydd, and the removal of Tarmac heaps, old silage bags, and graffiti in many parts of Snowdonia. To help her, the trust has gathered a large band of

volunteers with muscles and brains, and the Army has lent a hand with some of the heavy work.

What lies ahead? One splendid new project is the restoration of the original milestones on the great Holyhead road, now the A5, built by Thomas Telford in the early 19th century. On these elegantly carved stones there were once iron plaques giving not just the distance from London and Holyhead but the distance in miles and furlongs from the nearest staging post each way. Most of the stones remain, but most of the plaques have gone. With the help of the Welsh Office, the trust hopes to see them all replaced.

This summer, too, many "tree weeds", as Mrs Kirby calls them, will be removed. By this she means the rampaging undergrowth on tree-lined roads that completely screens the views when it is in leaf. Again, by slow, steady persuasion of the local farmers, the trust hopes to open up all the paths that encircle Snowdon and to link them up with each other to form a reliable network.

A few days ago I stood on the mountain path above Mrs Kirby's house and looked around. The sun was breaking through the clouds above the valley, two ravens circled high overhead and a sheep peered down at me from a rock. The sheep had the blue paint mark on its coat which showed that its lamb would still need to be tested for radioactive fallout from the Chernobyl disaster and then sent to the lowlands to feed until all traces of the dangerous radioactivity had gone. Snowdonia has had its troubles.

I am not entirely with Mrs Kirby on her anti-magpie campaign, because there are more serious enemies of small birds, including cats and herbicides, and I like magpies. But as I looked down at the farmhouse, it cheered me to think that two doughty octogenarian fighters were still plotting away there for the future of Snowdonia, quite undaunted.

• Esmé Kirby Snowdonia Trust, Capel Curig, Betws-y-Coed, Gwynedd LL24 0ES (tel/fax 01660 720234).

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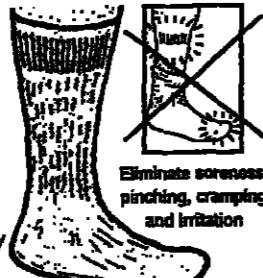
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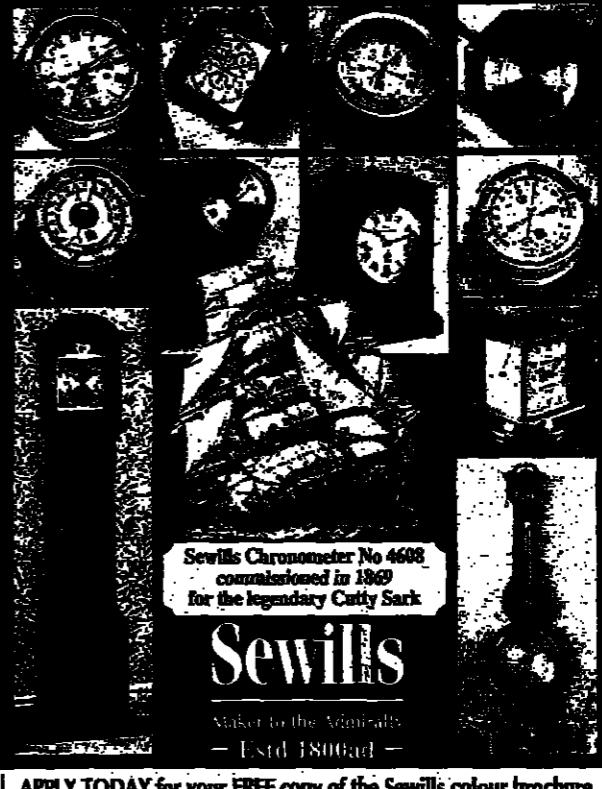
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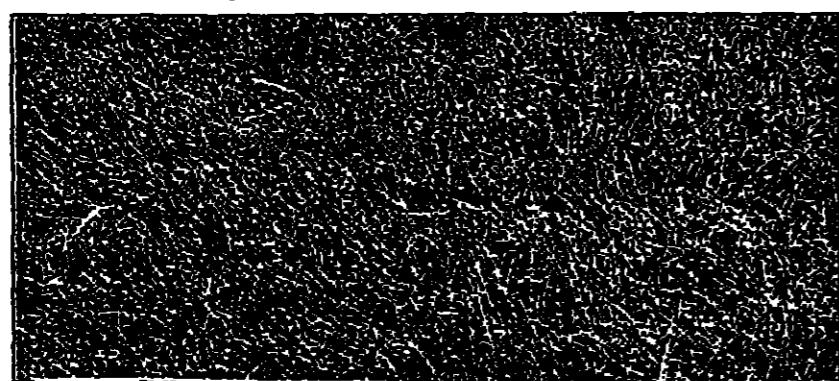
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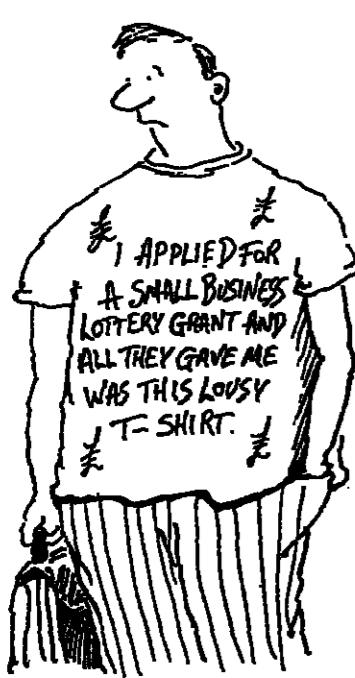
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The Times Young Cartoonist of the Year Award in honour of Mel Calman



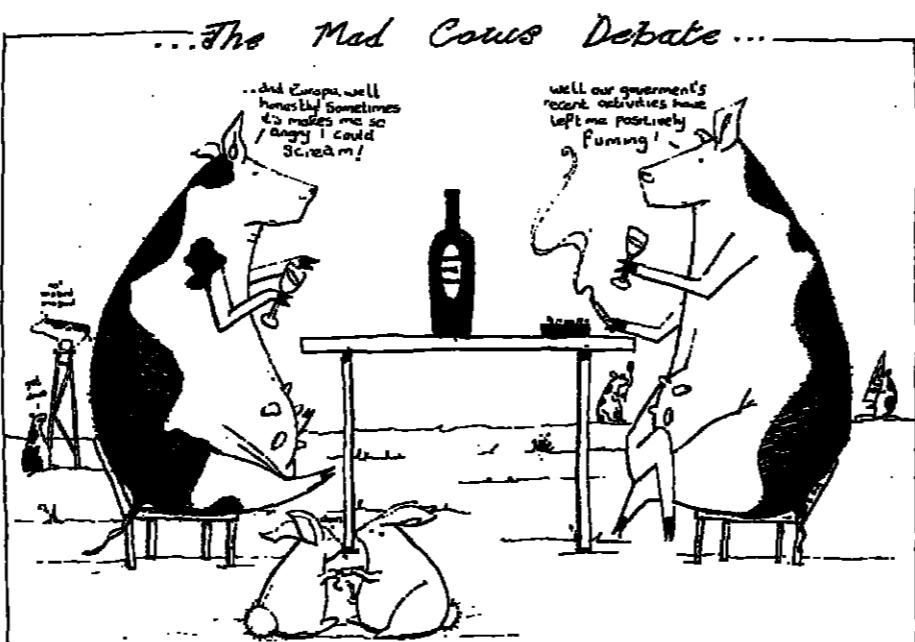
Above: Cristabel Millar was eight when she drew this snappy cartoon of John Major. The letter from *The Times* telling her she was shortlisted for the competition arrived on her ninth birthday — "the best present ever"

Left: "Look. All I'm saying is that if the worst comes to the worst, most of us here are convinced that there is a safe way to eat beef." This cartoon by Jamie Kyle, 29, of Liverpool, won him a place on the competition shortlist

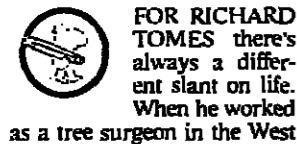


Left: shortlisted in the Under-30 category. Richard Tomes, of Solihull, has had work accepted by national magazines, despite a lack of training — just a grade C in GCSE art

Right: Chris Wreford, of Bristol, another entrant in the Under-30 category, won his place on the shortlist with this mad-cow debate cartoon



Pockets of wry humour



until his untimely death three years ago.

Even Calman, who scoured young artists' degree shows for new talent, would have been impressed by the youngest entrant on the shortlist this year, Cristabel Millar, just eight when she submitted her drawing of John Major.

The letter from *The Times* telling Cristabel of her place on the shortlist arrived on her ninth birthday. It was she, the best present she had ever given.

"Cristabel is absolutely thrilled to be on the shortlist," says her mother, Richenda Millar. "She is very critical of her own work and was worried that she hadn't made the drawing look enough like John Major."

Cristabel excels in her art classes at Hill House International Junior School in London, according to Kathryn Gunteridge, her teacher, who says: "Out of all the 300 children I teach, Cristabel's is a very unusual talent. She is perceptive and way beyond her years in terms of cartooning."

Mrs Millar says she and her husband, John, have no artistic ability. "I think Kathryn is a wonderful teacher," she says. "One day she had a class on Picasso. All the mothers arrived to collect their children from school to find them clutching their own 'cubist' paintings."

Cristabel's portrayal of a lonely Prime Minister would have appealed to Calman, according to his daughter Claire, a freelance writer who is one of the judges in this year's competition. "My

father's humour was very black — very much in the English tradition.

When we were doing the judging I told the others that the problem with cartoonists is they're such a bloody miserable bunch. But I suppose you would be slightly worried if cartoonists weren't a bit odd."

The competition attracted about 100 entries this year — down on the previous year's 300. But 1996 was the first year

good cartoonists are born, not made. "The secret of success is more to do with having a quick and distinctive sense of humour than being a brilliant draughtsman. It's easier to improve the drawing than the humour. I don't think it's possible to make someone into a cartoonist — they have it or they don't."

Brookes shares Miss Calman's disappointment at many of the entries while applauding those that made it on to the shortlist. "I think there were fewer this year that were successful, but the brief was very narrow and quite difficult," he says.

His own cartoons are covered by politicians, who often ask their office staff to write requesting the originals. "The only politician who writes personally is Ken Clarke," Brookes says. "Strangely, the cartoons he asks for always seem to be the ones that show him dominating Major."

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Brookes' advice to young hopefuls is to try cartooning keeping their day job. "It's a very difficult field and it's easier to freelance while you work out what you really want to do," he says.

Jamie Kyle, 29, from Liverpool, was training to be a solicitor when he decided he could no longer resist the desire to be an artist. He is now doing an art foundation course at Hugh Baird College in Liverpool.

"I'm a drawaholic. I spent the whole of my law course doodling through lectures and finally decided to try to do art seriously. I entered *The Times* competition last year but I didn't win anything. It's really

great to be on the shortlist this year."

Kyle is a Calman fan. "I prefer pocket cartoons to any other form because I'm quite impatient. I get frustrated if I don't get a result immediately," he says.

"I get most of my ideas for jokes at night, so I have a book next to my bed. Although I have always dreamt of doing something artistic, I am full of self-doubt. I think no one will ever laugh at my cartoons."

Simon Torrance, who was 29 when he submitted his shortlisted entry, had not yet been tempted to give up his job as a management consultant.

TORRANCE draws in his spare time and is illustrating a handbook on office politics. "It's the sort of book you buy for your auntie and she puts it in the lavatory," he says.

Torrance began drawing cartoons as a child and soon progressed to caricatures of his teachers at Bristol Grammar School. "I used to draw cartoons for my granny. I invented a new race of people with no arms and big noses. I was inspired by Asterix and Tintin and I loved the Calman cartoons in *The Times*, which was most lying around at home," he says.

"I have never entered a competition before but I would love to be a full-time artist if it would pay the bills. It would be great to live like Picasso in a huge house in France surrounded by beautiful women."

EMMA WILKINS

Now he is one of the shortlisted entrants who will be gathering at Simpson's-in-the-Strand, London, next Thursday for *The Times* Young Cartoonist of the Year Award in conjunction with the British Cartoonists' Association. The annual award, now in its second year, is in honour of Mel Calman. Who brought his dark yet touching humour to pocket cartoons on the front page of *The Times* for 15 years



"The Palace confirms that Fergie's new home will be financed entirely by her book sales"

By Simon Torrance

of the competition, the brief was wider — any cartoon was accepted as long as it complied with the chosen theme of food and drink.

This year the judges set a more difficult standard: a front-page pocket cartoon along Calman-esque lines.

"There were too few cartoons that made me laugh this year," Miss Calman says. "We had a lot of accomplished drawings but it's original ideas that really interest me."

Peter Brookes, the *Times* political cartoonist, believes

Brookes' advice to young hopefuls is to try cartooning keeping their day job. "It's a very difficult field and it's easier to freelance while you work out what you really want to do," he says.

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ARTICLES

better grass

'Women barely contemplate seeing one another unless food is involved, diet or no diet... but men do it only when they're very, very drunk'

Just what is it about the idea of dinner that is so threatening to the average heterosexual male? Is the word forever associated with a schmaltzy vision of candlelight, romance, single rose in vase and Mantoviano strings? There has to be a reason why my friends wouldn't dream of meeting *doux* in a restaurant, let alone risk getting together over a bowl of pasta and a bottle of wine in each others' homes.

The other day I suggested to my husband that he invite one of his friends round, as a pleasant deviation from their usual pint-in-pub-post-foote male-bonding syndrome. What a reaction. In his mind's eye, he had clearly transformed himself into a mincing *Cage aux Folies* houseboy.

However interesting the differences are between the sexes, I have never quite been able to bring myself to read those gender-gender bestsellers, which all appear to have been written by Americans with degrees in socio-psycholinguistics — Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus and Why don't you understand me, you great big banana-

head; women yak, men talk back, or words to that effect.

Perhaps if I had done, I would now understand why men will eat together only at night if they're under the age of 30, very very drunk, and in somewhere resolutely unromantic, such as a brightly lit Lebanese take-away, or an indifferent curry house under a winking neon sign: "Lager Louts Most Welcome Here!"

Women, on the other hand, will barely contemplate seeing one another — diet or no diet — unless food is involved. This is why restaurants are full of females — often in twosomes — day or night, because, although we have no qualms about cooking for one another, it's quite fun to escape the domestic scene, to dress up a bit, eat delicious food and be waited on. This way, you don't have to worry about the washing-up or the reciprocal invitation, or the child waking up just as you've got to a particularly succulent

morsel of gossip. Male friendship, it seems to me, is completely different from female friendship, and I don't quite see the point of it. The girlie date is a rewarding bumper-pack of the confections, therapy and careers advice session all rolled up in one. You emotive, You whinge, You bitch, You ruminate, You beat your breast, You laugh a lot, and order another bottle of wine.

Friendship between women is all about intimacy, the sharing and off-loading of feelings. It is the pleasure of moving from epic events on the world

stage to the ministrations of one's own life. It is both a liberation and deeply sustaining. I can't imagine life without it.

Women are promiscuous with their friendship. We let down our guard for each other, old pals and new, at the drop of a hat. For us, it is an effortless trajectory from small talk to big talk and back

again. There is something enjoyably fluid and easy about our relationships — the passion and playfulness, the high seriousness and the high jinks. We talk to each other in the way that men talk to their lovers. Men don't have the same

cherishing, cocooning idea of friendship at all.

Now, whether our husbands and partners would benefit if their friendships were more like our own is an interesting point. It could be argued that if they were able to indulge in a little more soul-searching with one another it might take the heat off their primary relationships.

But I have to say that the women in my circle (and I include myself) are not noticeably undemanding because of our deep and meaningful, fabuous friendships with one another.

Why is it that women and men bond with their own sex in such different ways? I remember, years ago, reading about some psychological tests that were carried out on children — boys and girls were paired off by gender, and left alone together, two at a time. The boys set to

work, happily building Lego blocks together or making model aeroplanes, and hardly exchanged a word. The girls, in marked contrast, started chattering about their families, whether their favourite doll was Sindy or Tracy, and hardly paused for breath.

The conclusion was that very early on, boys slipped into doing things together, while what the girls like was *talk* to one another.

Perhaps that's why men like meeting somewhere neutral and blokeish, with lots of distracting things to do in case the conversation dries up. An old-fashioned pub is ideal — darts, snooker table, mega-sized television screen — a haven from feminine frippery, somewhere safely, reassuringly male, with a whiff of the barracks or the locker room.

It's a funny thing. Modern Man can change a nappy. Modern Man can cope with his wife earning more than him. Modern Man can cook, clean and hug a tree. But Modern Man wouldn't be seen dead eating in a brasserie with his best friend after dark. Dinner must be the last frontier.

ASHLEY COOKE

LIFE AND SOUL



GINNY DOUGALLY

Who says I need a husband?

Even in the 1990s, families are pressurising single women to get married, says Adrian Mourby

Population figures tell us that there are slightly more men in Britain than women these days — and yet far more of the women seem to be single. Unless we are a nation of bigamists, this doesn't make sense; but it's true that *Blind Date* attracts three times as many gorgeous girls as fellas, and agony columns are either full of women wondering if they'll ever find a partner, or of women wishing that their families would stop wondering if they'll ever find a partner.

We may all have squirmed while watching *Pride and Prejudice*'s Mrs Bennet push her daughters on to Mr Collins and Mr Bingley, but Mary Hooper, 36, a script executive who works for various London production companies, says the pressure is still there today. By Jane Austen's standards, she would be on the shelf by now. After all, Anne Elliott in *Persuasion* was virtually beyond redemption at 27. In her twenties, Mary didn't think much about settling down, nor did many of her colleagues. "But as you approach 30 you get paranoid that everyone is pointing out how you're single and they're not. I did go through a phase of feeling defensive. If I was invited round to dinner with other couples, I used to get steamed up about the fact that they spent all evening talking about their marriages and children, and yet if they invited me round with other single people I used to feel that they were having a 'be kind to singles' night."

Mary moved in with her boyfriend within a year of leaving college and split up with him when she was 28. "I think that made being 30 hard

to take but the good thing has been that there are lots of other people in the same boat. I don't know whether it's a London thing but there are so many women building their own lives and supporting each other, and I like that. It might be difficult in a smaller place where everyone is in couples."

Suzi Bloxham lives in such a place. She is an art teacher who lives in Shropshire and readily describes herself as single. Although Suzi is only 27, she recognises, like Anne Elliott, that marriage is becoming the norm among her friends. "Suddenly there were all these weddings and I realised that more than half the people I knew, probably 60 per cent, were getting married — and I was always the bridesmaid."

But Suzi didn't go down this route. "I had a boyfriend when I left college but I'd got the chance of this really good job as head of art in Shropshire and that was what I wanted to go for."

I moved from Bath to a small school on the Welsh border and, of necessity, embraced an independent lifestyle, which has been a challenge but a thoroughly enjoyable one.

Although she has lots of male friends, Suzi has noticed of late that they're all married. "All my single friends seem to be women!" she says. "But it's not a big issue. I don't mind being called Miss and I tick the box marked 'single' quite happily."

At 27, Suzi doesn't have that awful anxiety about her biological clock ticking away, which can plague some older women. The greatest problem she finds with being single is not finding anyone to talk to when she gets home. "My phone bill is not a pretty sight but I'm fortunate working

with other teachers because they're all caring and interested people and I feel I've made lots of friends here."

Having turned down one proposal of marriage, Suzi isn't worried that she'll never find a long-term partner. But this is something that Mary has had to come to terms with. "The first thing to remember is that it's not the worst thing that can happen to you," she says. "When I see some of my girlfriends with their husbands and children I stop and think, would I really change places with them? They never seem to get any sleep or have any time to themselves. And as for sex, to hear them talk you'd think that all that stopped years ago. Maybe I always come back to an empty flat afterwards, but at least I get to

do what I want." Seven years of independence have left Mary unsure that she could ever live with anyone else. "It's so clear how I want to live my life now that I can't see myself making that kind of space for anyone else again. I'd love to have children, but not at any price."

Suzi is still young enough to laugh at the problems of not having a Mr D'Arcy or Captain Wentworth in tow. "These days when I go to weddings I notice people don't quite know what to do with a single woman who's not a bridesmaid. I find I get put on the 'bits and pieces' table. I don't mind that, but there have been one or two weddings which I've been surprised not

to be invited to. I can only think that's because I didn't fit in with the seating plan." Fortunately, her family has shown no great concern to marry her off. "All except my gran. I'm very close to her but she will keep saying things like 'she doesn't want to see me left on the shelf' or that it's her dearest wish to see me settled." Sometimes she even tells me that she's met this really nice young man and I just know what she's thinking! Fortunately, I've always been able to talk to her and so I explain that I just haven't found anyone I want to settle down with yet. It simply isn't a problem."

But if Suzi is still unmarried in ten years, she may not feel so sure. The problem for her and for Mary is the same as it was for all of Jane Austen's

heroes. The world is full of couples and their values dominate our society. Mary says: "If you let yourself get sensitised to it you see it everywhere. Couples on adverts, on TV, even magazines for single women seem to be

all about how to get yourself partners and it's silly to pretend otherwise. But that doesn't necessarily make them happier."

● Adrian Mourby's latest novel, *The Four of Us*, will be published this week (Hodder £17.99).



Suzi Bloxham, 27, with a portrait of her grandmother. "She's always saying she doesn't want to see me left on the shelf or that it's her dearest wish to see me settled"

Ruth Gledhill joins a Docklands congregation as members reflect on their marriage vows

Baptists for better or worse



THIS community centre, built 100 years ago as a centre for dockers, mirrors the sweeping changes that have enveloped London's docklands in the last decade. The Quaystone church meets in the tiny, pink-walled chapel built on the top of the centre, reached through a series of doorways, corridors and an almost-Italianate paved ornamental garden.

Its revival under the helmanship of the Rev Steve Hill, the enthusiastic 31-year-old Baptist minister who has built the congregation up from four people meeting in a living room, is such that the chapel is now almost too small for the 50 or so regular worshippers. At our service they included a doctor and his family, painters and decorators and office workers from nearby Canary Wharf.

Remarkably, almost all were in their thirties or younger. Tiny children sat at their feet, until they were taken to a separate room for Sunday school. We were within striking distance of the City of London but it could have been a missionary outpost in a distant land. There was a strong sense of the type of gritty, pioneering spirit normally associated with the American west. We were at the end of the first ever National Marriage



Rousing music at the Quaystone

Week. Bishops had been warning of the dangers to society of treating marriage as disposable, and urging couples to invest more time and energy in maintaining their marriages. Hundreds of couples throughout the country had been to services to renew their marital vows of lifelong fidelity.

But at this service, Mr Hill decided

not to have a renewal of vows. In a bid

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MINISTER: The Rev Steve Hill

SERMON: Could be summed up as: If crossed in love, don't get cross, turn to the Cross. ★★★

ARCHITECTURE: Refurbished old

chapel, like the surrounding Docklands

a strange blend of old and new. ★★

MUSIC: Modern and traditional. ★★★

SPIRITUAL HIGH: Full of ups and

downs. ★★★

AFTER-SERVICE CARE: Constant

supply of tea. ★★★★

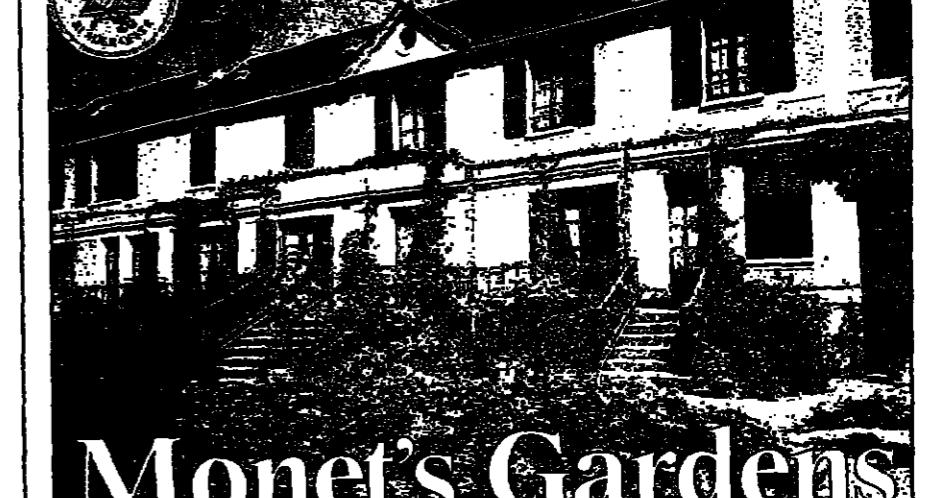
had not booked and reminded me of our honeymoon," he said. "We went for a day out in Paris and ended up on the *peripherique* and couldn't find our way off it. I blamed Alison because she couldn't read a map. It ended with her getting out of the car and walking off. I drove off and only then realised I was on this one-way system and had no way to get back." It all ended happily, he reported. "But I am just saying this to show that even on our honeymoon, we were a couple with rows as a natural part of our relationship. But it has not been six years of rows." Conflict in a relationship does not mean that relationship should never have been. "Conflict and arguments are there to help us grow and mature and become more like Christ."

He quoted from Ephesians 4:26: "Don't let the sun go down on anger."

He continued: "The Bible says relationships should be characterised by peace." He warned against repression or explosion as methods of dealing with anger. Instead, measured confrontation was the answer, outlined in Proverbs 15:1: "A gentle answer turns away wrath but a harsh word stirs up anger."

After driving fruitlessly around

London looking for somewhere to eat (everywhere was full) he found a restaurant with a table but waited 30 minutes for the starter. He and his wife had a row. "She was upset that I



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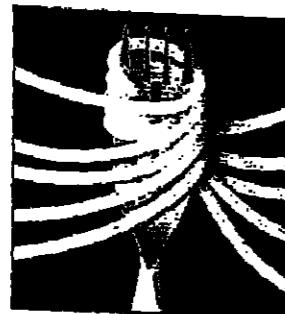
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TED MEADWOOD/ALL WILD IMAGES



The East Alligator escarpment in Kakadu (above) guards a wilderness of stunning beauty containing a multitude of wildlife in the swamps of the Yellow Waters (below) and sustaining the ancient hunting lifestyle of the Aborigines

They take crocodiles seriously in the top end of Australia, particularly the estuarine water beasts, the "salties" of film fame. These can grow to 30-odd feet, live to be 100 years old and can take a buffalo and, holding him by the nose, drag him under the water.

Not that any human has actually been taken by a croc in the Northern Territories since 1987. But with a couple of dozen saltwater and freshwater crocs to every kilometre (or "ks" as the Australians call them) and some 100 fished out of Darwin Harbour alone during the year, nobody is taking any chances.

Now can they afford to. The hunters and the farmers may rage against the "greenies" and their conservation policy that preserves all the nasties. But the quarter-million tourists and backpackers come mainly for the wildlife.

And what a wildlife there is. Kakadu National Park to the south of Darwin is the largest wetlands conservation area in the world, a park the size of Wales with the complete ecology of the estuarine system from mangrove swamps to paperbark gum trees (surely one of the most beautiful and diverse species of tree in the world) to rainforest, woodland and granite ranges.

We were there at the end of the dry season in October when the water had retreated to the main rivers and a series of permanent lakes, or billabongs, around which the wildlife concentrated in astonishing proximity and abundance. The locals argue that the wet season, when the plains are flooded and everything is unbelievably green and growing, is even more beautiful, even if the wildlife is more dispersed.

To add to all this — an intrinsic part of it, indeed — there is the Aboriginal art, painted with ochre, spontaneously, surprise and mystery on innumerable caves and the rock overhangs of the escarpment that confines the estuarine

system. Some of the paintings are more than 20,000 years old according to the guides — as much as 150,000 according to new discoveries and dating techniques announced last autumn. This caused considerable doubt in the academic community and an outburst of nationalist fervour in the press, eager to reaffirm not just Australia's uniqueness but also its superiority in age and progress to Europe.

The prehistoric and the indigenous — flora, fauna and ancient culture — are what Australian eco-tourism is all about, particularly in the Northern Territories which is trying to build its holiday trade on a total view of environmental or "interpretive" tourism.

Only opened up to exploration this century and to settlement much more recently, the "Top End" remains still an unspoilt wilderness trod for literally tens of thousands of years by one of the most ancient peoples in the world. What makes Australia so exciting, is that their way of hunting and gathering are still going on just.

You can turn your head from examining startlingly fresh rock paintings of stick-like humans and carefully delineated geese and snakes and then look out across the plains, the forests of dozens of different species of eucalyptus (Australia has more than 200) and the bird-filled billabongs. They are unaltered since the original painters had marked the spot and signalled the game in prehistoric times.

You can also look around and see a people pushed aside by a Western tide that has destroyed their social units, introduced them to alcohol and devastating results and made them subject to a degree

of racial prejudice of quite astonishing openness among the older Australian Whites. Guilt and new appreciation have led in Australia to the development of a policy of environmental correctness and retrospective recompense that is sometimes bizarre in its consequences. The Northern Territories is inhabited by less than 1 per cent of Australia's population, some 175,000 people, and covers a sixth of its land with an area the size of Britain and France combined. Of that nearly half is owned by the Aborigines.

Most of the wilderness at the Top End belongs to the local peoples and is leased to the government national parks administration and tourist operators. They bring in the visitors whose fees are then used to keep the Aborigines in a dependency economy, meant to preserve their hunting and gathering lifestyles free of the corruption that money always brings. Kakadu is owned by

the Aborigines and shaped like a crocodile. But for a long time its largest hotel, the Gagudju in the uranium mining town of Jabiru, would not allow Aborigines into the dining room because their dress and habits upset the guests.

Anyone is allowed into the Kakadu and other national parks so long as they keep away from sacred sites and forbidden art locations. Only a few, and then at a price, are allowed into the surrounding Aboriginal tribal lands.

The masses visit the national parks in camper vans or just with sleeping bags or "swags", and plenty of water

(essential) in the hot season — and don't wade into the billabongs to refill if you don't want to become lunch for a saltie. The wealthier stay in the luxury hotels and — particularly if they are American or German — fish in areas where conservation policies have made the game plentiful and ready to be caught.

Seven Spirit Bay, a luxury hotel on the Cobourg Peninsula at the northern tip of Arnhem Land, for example, has octagonal open-sided bedroom units and separate bathrooms under open sky that fulfil every dream of melding into the wilderness. On the other hand, it can only be reached by small aircraft and costs more than £200 per person a day/night visit.

As a multimillionaire sephagarian complained: how could they restrict his luggage to get on the biplane? After much argument, he left three suitcases but insisted on bringing one essential piece of equipment — his exercise bike.

And yet our stay at the hotel was idyllic — good food, well organised walks, fine views of the sea. Oh, how one longed for a quick dip if one could only brave the crocs or the killer box jellyfish that come in for the wet season.

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We have chartered the "Coral Princess", an ideal vessel carrying 54 passengers. Normally employed on Australia's Great Barrier Reef, this 144 ft luxury catamaran is designed for maximum stability and guest comfort.

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sunset. But it is for the outback that one comes to Australia — particularly in the Northern Territories.

This state stretches from the tropics in the north to the "red heart" of central Australia at Alice Springs, a couple of thousand miles south. Staying on the land is the only way to feel it.

Down in the south we stayed in Bond Springs Station, a century-old,

750,000-acre property outside Alice Springs. Here the round-up is done by helicopter; the bullock man had been flown up from Melbourne to install the Aga shipped directly from England (within a few hours

he had embarked on a fling with the girl from the abattoir); the election officials had come with a portable cardboard voting booth to make sure everyone did their democratic duty (the right-wing National Party candidate was an Aboriginal made good in the prison service and was objecting to more handouts for his people); and the guide on a breathtaking night of bird-watching was a former Gurkha officer from Zimbabwe.

However, the other property we stayed in at El Questro Station, in the north of Western Australia, was a luxury

homestead on a million-acre ranch owned by an Old Etonian. You could stay in accommodation ranging from tents to cabins or the owner's ranch house perched spectacularly above a gorge. The landscape was red rock, with scattered minerals (you can chip away in what they call "fossicking" where there is a permit), hot springs and the primeval shapes of the baobab tree.

The property's "native guide" turned out to be a highly decorated part-Afghan veteran of the Vietnam War and the cattle driver called Buddy with a pair of bowed legs you could drive a "mob" of cows through. A genuine stockman, he made his living by appearing in rodeos with two six-shooters or a whip ("the Genuine Aboriginal Cowboy from Australia" as they billed him in the United States) and also modelling jeans in fashion shoots.

"They had us there, me and three models," he recalled, pointing to a big rock in the river. "And the photographer said 'Buddy, for heaven's sake don't tell the girls there's crocs in the river'. So I said nothing as the girls splashed in the water. But I did make sure my mate kept a rifle under a blanket close by."

"I told him: 'If anything moves in the water, don't wait. Just blast it.' By God, they were angry when I told them about it after."

The author was a guest of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission.

Australia's "Top End" is one of the last truly unspoilt wildernesses in the world. Adrian Hamilton samples the serenity of life by the billabong



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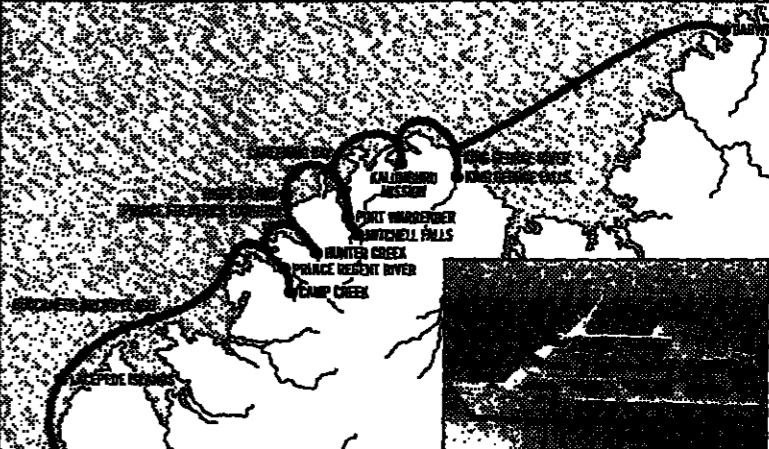
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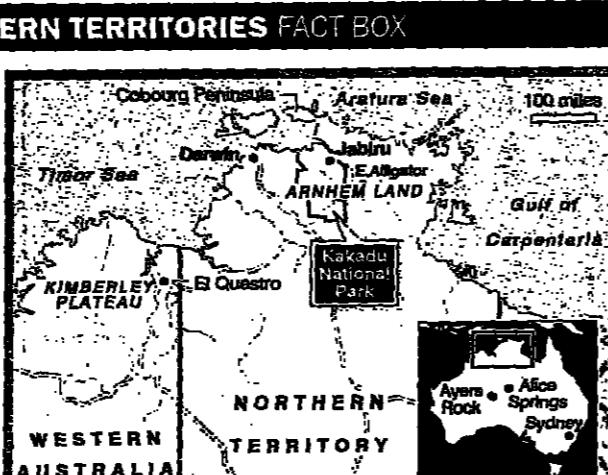
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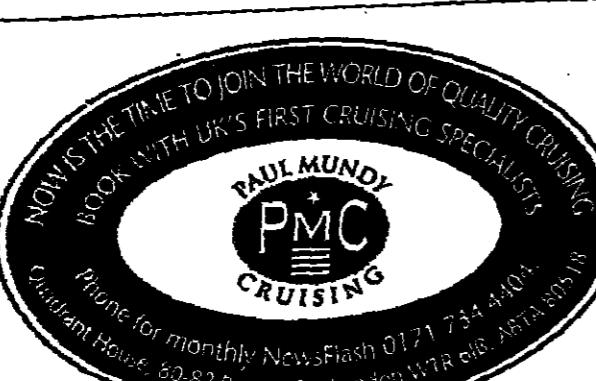
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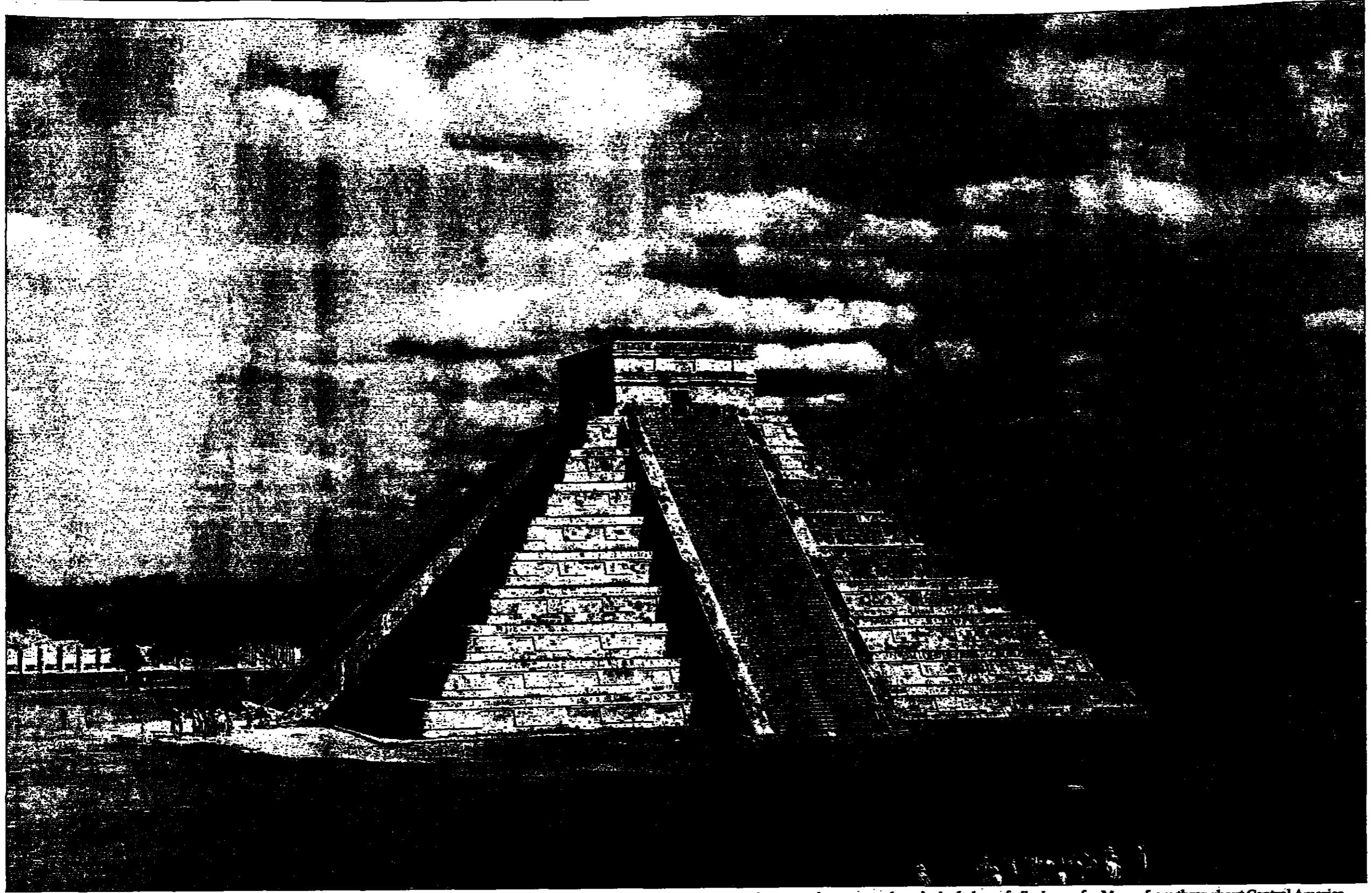
■ Accommodation at Seven Spirit Bay (99 790 277) costs from A\$299 per person a night in high season (April 1-Oct 31) or A\$249 in low season (Nov 1-Mar 31). Includes three meals a day and cost of an access permit to Aboriginal lands.

■ Prices at Ayers Rock are from A\$273 per room at the Outback Pioneer Hotel to A\$334 for a standard room at the Luxury Hotel Ayers Rock Resort Central Reservations, Sydney 2 360 9099. Scenic flights, A\$60.

■ The Travel Bookshop (0171-828 5269) recommends Australia — Northern Territory Aboriginal Art, by Wally Carnarva (Thames and Hudson, £6.99). The Songlines, by Bruce Chatwin (Picador, £6.99). Northern Territory (Lonely Planet, £8.99).



Mexico: At sea, treasures of the reef Jacques Cousteau revealed; on land, ancient architectural heritage...



The temple at Chichen Itza, the greatest testament to Mayan expertise in mathematics, astronomy, sculpture, architecture, and construction, was an the principal place of pilgrimage for Mayas from throughout Central America

Diving with the god of the Mayas

COZUMEL FACT FILE

■ Continental Airlines (0800 776464) flies to Cozumel via an overnight stop in Houston from £605 return. British Airways (0345 2221111) flies from Heathrow or Gatwick to Miami (overnight stop) from £367 return connecting with Mexicana Airways to Cozumel from £154 return.

■ The Hotel Presidente Inter-Continental (0345 581444 local rate in UK) is Cozumel's only five-star hotel. Its 1997 charges are from £88 per room, including tax. Lower priced hotels are found in the island's only town. Check with the Mexican Tourist Office (0171-734 1058) for details.

■ Global Travel Club (01268 541732) custom designs holidays in the Yucatan from £1,345 per person for seven days to £1,800 for 14 days, depending on standard of accommodation and services required. Flying from the UK, Cathy Matthes Mexican Tours / Mexicana Airlines (0171-284 2550) also offers personalised Yucatan tours from £1,200.

According to Mayan legend the Caribbean island of Cozumel 12 miles off Mexico's Yucatan peninsula was the home of Ixchel, goddess of love and fertility. Today, it is better known for spectacular diving around the world's second largest coral reef. Above the water, equally spectacular Mayan pyramids and temples are no more than a couple of hours travelling time away.

When I walked through the door of the secluded Hotel Presidente Inter-Continental the concierge greeted me by name with a glass of champagne. This is something I could become accustomed to. Below my bedroom's first-floor balcony a *xxoo kaa*, a blackbird with a long black beak, anorexic body and long tail, squawks and struts on long spindly legs across a palm-fringed powdery white beach and over to the large swimming pool with connected Jacuzzi, from which it proceeds to drink.

The range and quality of the food in the hotel's two restaurants — the indoor El Arrecife, with panoramic views of the turquoise Caribbean, and the beachside El Caribe, sheltered beneath a roof thatched with the *huano* palm to form a Mayan *palapa* — puncture the first of many preconceptions about Mexico, its limited cuisine. So do the national wines.

But the main attraction for visitors is the reefs, revealed by Jacques Cousteau in 1954. Clemente, one of the PADI divemasters of Scuba, which operates out of the hotel, suggested I didn't need a wetsuit for the dive to the Santa Rosa Wall. These Mexicans are some tough guys, thought I, it just has to be cold that far down. Wrong again on the second count.

After a 40-minute boat ride from one of the hotel's two piers, we dropped into water with a temperature of 86F: 90F below it was only four degrees cooler, warmer than my local



A fisherman hauls in his catch offshore at Yucatan

indoor heated swimming pool. The visibility is so good that the surface seems tantalisingly close, and then you glide over the edge of a white sandy plateau to peer down a vertical wall that disappears into an abyss 3,000ft deep. It's the nearest to a space wall that I've experienced.

The top 10ft of the wall is coral reef riddled with caves, grottoes, and tunnels. Accompanied by large inquisitive yellow-finned and black groupers, we rode the current to explore stunning coral buttresses still vividly coloured even at this depth. Inside the caves, our torches illuminated giant sea fans amid purple vase, yellow tube, and brown rope sponges, while one long narrow tunnel was lined with blood red sponges.

The second of the two-tank dives took us to the Paradise

reef, two long ridges of coral rising above white sand 40ft below the surface. The strong current carried us past green knobbed star corals, corals looking like giant brown brains, corals resembling delicate purple ferns waving in the wind, and a host of others. I stopped to examine a pillar coral, and the first nine inches of a spotted moray emerged snake-like from beneath a ledge and snapped its sharp teeth at my hand.

Each dive is different. All provide a multitude of multicoloured and multi-shaped fishes, corals and sponges. Even snorkelling ten yards out from the hotel beach showed a greater variety of marine life in 20 minutes than had a week's diving in the Aegean Sea. And for those who don't want to wet their feet, a trip in a glass-bottomed boat provides the next best experience.

You can use the air-conditioned luxury of the hotel as a base from which to visit all the principal Mayan sites by day trips. But I opted for a guided tour of the Yucatan peninsula, which began at Tulum, the only walled city by the sea that the Mayas built. Its most impressive building is the Castillo, a limestone pyramid topped by a temple, which perches on the highest point on the peninsula, a bluff about 40ft above the beach. The region is very flat.

A recurring motif carved on many of the city's 60 buildings is a god whose legs project from above his head. This is referred to as the Diving God, or the God Descending from

the Sky, or the God of Birth, or... Interpretations of Mayan origins and culture equal the number of investigating archaeologists multiplied by the number of surviving Mayas. This is due primarily to Fray Diego de Landa, second Bishop of Yucatan. With the enlightenment of a Franciscan conquistador, Landa realised that the snake venerated by the Mayas was none other than the serpent who tempted Eve to sin in Paradise. And so he set about exterminating all Mayan writings and traces of their history, and religion.

Fortunately, he failed to destroy the greatest testament to Mayan expertise in mathematics, astronomy, sculpture, architecture, and construction. Chichen Itza was the principal place of pilgrimage for some 200 Mayan settlements scattered across the Yucatan, Guatemala, Belize, and northern Honduras, although by the 10th century it was dominated by more warlike Toltecs from central Mexico.

A singular advantage of staying at a hotel near Chichen Itza is that you have about two hours to wander over the site before the coachloads of day trippers arrive. At quarter past eight in the morning I stood alone in the temple of the plumed serpent, Kukulkan, which is built on top of a pyramid made of nine stacked square platforms of decreasing size such that the slope of the pyramid is exactly 45 degrees.

Below me, two eagles glided over the carpet of jungle that stretches to the horizon in every direction, pierced to the south by the white limestone dome of the Observatory. To the west of the clearing at the foot of the pyramid lies the Temple of the Jaguars, attached to one of the two long, high parallel walls that form the Ball Court. To the east the Temple of the Warriors stands atop a pyramid that rises from the Terrace of a Thousand Columns. And to the north a straight limestone path cuts through the jungle to the Sacred Well, into which sacrificial victims were cast.

From this vantage point it is easy to imagine the power of the priests over the throngs of Mayan pilgrims below, especially at the spring and autumn equinoxes. At sunset on these days the northwestern terraced edge of the pyramid casts an undulating shadow which joins the sculpted serpent's tail at the top of the northern ramp to the serpent's head at the bottom: Kukulkan is descending from his temple.

JOHN HANDS

• The author was a guest of Inter-Continental Hotels.

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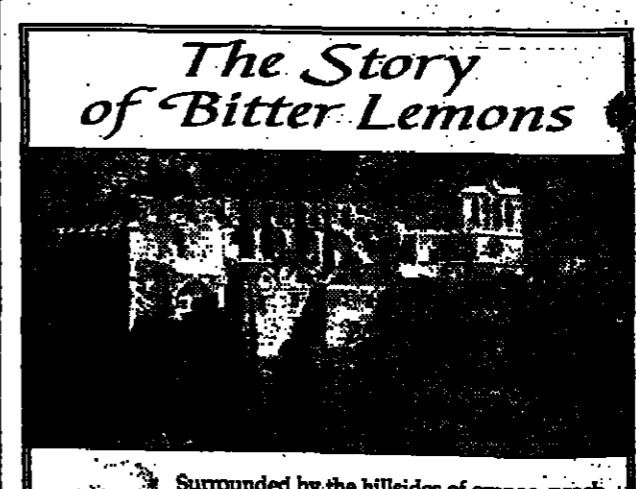
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... exotica at mealtimes in the southern state of Oaxaca; the pros and cons of taking a resort-style holiday

Crunch time at lunchtime

They lay heaped on the plate, fried to a dark reddish-brown. It had to be done — a spoonful sprinkled on the tortilla, then swamped with plenty of spicy guacamole, stringy cheese, anything else that might usefully disguise the taste.

If you want to return to Oaxaca, you must eat grasshopper. And after a couple of days in this enticing place there was no question. We chewed the *chapulines* (actually not bad) and moved on to the more mouthwatering items on the table.

Oaxaca — pronounced Wahaka — is a southeastern state of Mexico with the reputation of being culturally fascinating but a poor relation. The national Government worries about occasional rebellions, but visitors do not.

If your ideas of Mexico are largely confined to Zapata moustaches, revolutions and the writing of Graham Greene, you should not put off. Greene may have hated Mexico's poverty and corruption but Oaxaca does not figure in his marvelous novel *The Power and the Glory*. Nonetheless, when you enter the stupendous gold interior of the church of Santo Domingo and are exhorted to "remember the needy", the Catholic dilemmas of the novel come to mind.

"One of the most extravagantly gorgeous churches in the world," said Aldous Huxley. We just sat in the pews and gawped. A brief unseasonal shower fell outside and men working on the restoration of a dusty convent next door smiled. This was December and it was the first rain since August.

Oaxaca city, the eponymous capital of the state, is a delight at Christmas. The zocalo, or central square, is the focal point of the city — actually more of a middle-sized town, with no tall buildings or wide boulevards — and it buzzes at all hours with stall-holders selling rugs, brightly painted wooden carvings, black pottery, leather goods, jewellery, hideous Nativity figures, steaming tamales and bewildering varieties of sweets. One man holding a very thin rib offers: "I write your name on a grain of rice" (irresistible for children with our surname). Women pass with trays piled high with gofio, walnut and burnt sugar cakes.

Oaxaca is good at markets. Near the zocalo, around the Basílica de la Soledad, stalls stretch down steps, round corners, on and on, mixing with funfair rides. At the Plaza de la Danza, 30 flavours of ice cream were on sale.

Another day we headed off for the market of markets at Monte Albán, 20 miles out of Oaxaca city. Prices seem to be the same for tourists as for locals. People are friendly and do not get difficult if you do not buy. You can spend hours just walking and looking at the produce. Piles of bulging or emaciated chillies, dried hibiscus flowers, green-feathered toucan heads (the birds are trapped by putting glue on the trees), spring onions the size of billiard balls, goat skins. Even when I discovered that my



wallet had been lifted it was not too upsetting.

Back in Oaxaca that evening there was a Nativity procession in the zocalo led by a young Mary on a beautiful donkey. We crunched past the *buñuelos* stalls — where you eat fried corn tortillas with a sweet sauce and chuck the bowl over your shoulder so it smashes on the ground as you make a wish — then got distracted by the dodgems.

In the distance a youthful brass band was massacring carols outside Santo Domingo. And the birthday *piñatas* were out for Jesus, so crowds gathered underneath these star-shaped decorations that were suspended above the street on a rope. A blindfolded volunteer has to whack the *piñata* with a stick until it smashes, then the goodies inside shower down and a screaming, laughing scrum forms. Our five-year-old, re-fired battered and tearful after the first scramble, the six-year-old bided her time and got handfuls of sweets from sympathetic teenagers.

We returned to our marvellous hotel, the Camino Real, a beautifully converted convent and undoubtedly the place to stay in Oaxaca if your budget can stand it. In the hall an orchestra played; in the main courtyard the guitars of a mariachi band drifted up and serenaded the children sleep.

Breakfasts at the Camino Real are a treat. You soon get used to putting away a plate of pork enchiladas, or perhaps *chilaquiles rojos* (reconstituted tortillas with tomato, pepper and sour cream). Not to forget a *tamale de mole*, wrapped corn cakes smothered in a dark chocolatey sauce. *Mole*, an Oaxacan specialty, is a fantastically complex, spicy creation with up to 72 ingredients, including chocolate. This is thousands of miles from the Americanised Mexican food served in Britain. Every morning Leonor would make tortillas on the griddle, while Plutarcho cooked the eggs or bacon if you were feeling unadventurous.

Monte Albán, a few miles to the west, is the most impressive archaeological site, a plateau created by levelling the top of a hill as long ago as 500 BC and creating a sacred site. Oaxaca state is mostly mountainous, but here three valleys converge. A sacrificial victim in his final moments could look out from here and have a view to die for.

All the buildings sit directly facing or at right-angles to each other except one, presumed to be an observatory, stuck obstinately at 45 degrees. Under the blazing sun Mario, our guide, drew in the dust with a pointed stick and explained in diagrams how the angles, dates, equinoxes and solstices are perfectly built into the architecture.

A few yards away carvings of hunchbacks, breach births and hydrocephalic heads suggested an early medical school. There are some dark underground tombs — Number 104 is impressive with its frescoes and maize god over the entrance. A torch would have



Zapotec Indians in Oaxaca state prepare flowers for a colourful *posadas*, or procession, to celebrate Christmas

been handy. This is essentially a Zapotec site (discovering the layers of pre-Hispanic history and the differences between the 16 existing ethnic groups is one of the pleasures of visiting Oaxaca). It was at its peak between about AD 300 and 700, but deserted by the time the Spanish arrived in 1521.

Compare this with the remains of religious sites in Mitla, a few miles to the east, where the *conquistadores*, in a crude gesture of domination, made the native Indians build a church over their temple and forced them to worship the Christian God. Only later did archaeologists discover that the Indians had placed their own idols inside the walls.

Yugal is another splendid site, if your appetite for ruins is still sharp, with its large restored ball court. In this amazing sporting ritual, dating back at least 1,500 years, a game of five-a-side was played between two teams, the idea apparently being to keep the ball in the air using convenient hips, elbows, knees and shoulders. The stakes were high. Either the winning or the losing captain (depends who you talk to) was sacrificed.

Our guide offered the view that it must have been the winners who were sacrificed. He bases his theory on today's Mexican athletes who, in the Olympic Games in Atlanta, did not win any gold medals, presumably through fear of having their hearts cut out. A week was not enough in

OAXACA FACT FILE

■ The author travelled to Mexico City via Madrid on Iberia 0171-0011. Return flights from Heathrow via Madrid cost £407 plus fax until July 14, then £538. British Airways 0345 222118 flies to Mexico City for £439 plus tax until March 20, then £655. Internal flights from Mexico City to Oaxaca cost £108 return. Oaxaca to Huatulco £89.

■ Where to stay: Camino Real hotel, Calle 5 No. 300, 68000 Oaxaca (double room from £98 plus 17 per cent tax). Hotel Hostal de La Noria, Ave Hidalgo 918. Attractive good atmosphere, central location (double from US\$32 plus tax).

■ Cox and Kings (0171-873 5000) has a Land of the Maya 13-day tour, including three days in Oaxaca, starting at £1,795. Journey Latin America (0181-747 8315) does escorted group trips (a 14-night trip, including Oaxaca, costs from £1,640 per person in a twin

room) or individually tailored itineraries. Kuoni's 01206 742223 Mexico Panorama is an 11-day escorted tour, including two nights in Oaxaca, and an additional four nights in Cancún or Playa del Carmen, from £1,598.

■ Where to eat: La Casa de la Abuela in the Oaxaca zocalo. Specialises in *mole*, red, yellow and black. El Patio, between Tenochtitlán and Mitla. New restaurant in courtyard. Excellent *empanada* (chicken in yellow *mole*).

■ Best museums in Oaxaca city: Museo Regional de Oaxaca next to Santo Domingo (original Mixtec treasures), Museo Rufino Tamayo (pre-Hispanic artefacts).

■ Tourist office in Oaxaca: 00 52 951 4 28 37 Mexican Ministry of Tourism, 60-61 Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DS (0171-734 1058).

■ Essential: take a pocket Spanish dictionary.

High-rise horrors

Cancún is a holiday resort on the eastern fringes of Mexico's Yucatán peninsula. There, on a narrow strip of land ribboning between turquoise seas and a soupy lagoon, vast hotels have descended like spaceships. At night, under the splintered stars of a tropical sky, they glimmer eerily, casting a slick of light over the dark waters. By day they hum with the hustle of the tourist trade. The palm-thatched villages of Yucatán's native culture have been erased. Mexican traditions have been ransacked and drained almost dry.

Down town Cancún is like some time-trapped land where every night can be Saturday. It bristles with restaurants and nightclubs, discos and bars. You can dine on food from almost any part of the world from Portugal to Polynesia. But it is the stamp of the United States which is strongest. Mexican food, where you can find it, is good. Small *cafés* offer an economical *comida corrida* (set lunch) where spicy Yucatán dishes such as *pollo pibil* (chicken cooked in banana leaves) or succulent fresh fish are served with side dishes of chili, avocado and tortillas.

Native Mayan culture has been reduced to a consumer commodity in Cancún. Its last tawdry remains linger amid the tourist tat of shopping malls, silver jewellery and woven blankets, carved wooden masks and painted pottery. However, a short drive away the ruined cities of a pre-Hispanic people can still be found, as unearthly in their own way as Cancún.

It is best to get to Chichen Itza early in the morning. From about 10am, coachloads of other visitors begin to arrive. Overweight Texans haul themselves up the temple stairways like weight-watchers on some Mayan Stepmaster. One can imagine the ancient past when files of Maya priests in feather head-dresses would zigzag slowly to the pinnacles of sacred pyramids. Then, to the faithful who worshipped from afar, they would look like the great plumed serpent Quetzalcoatl. The only plumed serpent I saw was on the road back. A vast python had been crushed by a coach. Vultures were already devouring it.

RACHEL CAMPBELL-JOHNSTON

• The author was a guest of Sunset Holidays



Cancún: Mexican traditions have been ransacked

Or try Huatulco

The guidebooks described Huatulco, the beach resort on the south coast of Oaxaca state, as "the new Cancún". Mexico may be the destination for 1997, but Huatulco is earmarked as its resort of the millennium. The setting is beautiful, as the Mexican government noticed when it decided that Huatulco was the latest big project: nine bays, ripe for development over the next two decades. But today the comparison with Cancún is way off the mark. The hotels (only a handful so far, all upmarket) are no higher than six storeys. The water is clean. There are only 1,832 rooms in the whole resort.

There has been no mad scramble to build. Access to Huatulco is difficult. There is an airport but the road down from Oaxaca is tortuous and takes seven hours. A large road is planned but may be years away. Also, foreign investment has not been as enthusiastic as was hoped. When you ask who is building the next hotel, the director of development smiles and shrugs.

Huatulco is not for people who are interested in Mexico. Apart from indifferent shopping in La Crucecita or Santa Cruz (both new towns), you are in international country and likely to have chosen it for the high-quality hotels, beaches and activities. There are no historic sites within close range.

We stayed at the comfortable Royal Maeva, a sort of glorified Club Med, where at Christmas 60 per cent of guests were Canadian, 20 per cent were American and most of the rest Mexican or Guatemalan. For all-inclusive rates you get room, food, drink and activities, including tennis, snorkelling, scuba diving, sailing and windsurfing. The food was pleasant but bland after the delights of proper Mexican cuisine in somewhere like Oaxaca city. The staff were superb. The sun blazed down.

The children, from infants to teenagers, adored it. The adults enjoyed themselves too, but would have preferred somewhere more Mexican and less purpose-built. West along the coast is Puerto Escondido, a complete contrast — more Mexican, more interesting. The Santa Fe hotel is the place to stay, overlooking Zicatela Beach. Along the coast at Mazunte is a successful turtle research and conservation centre (turtles lay thousands of eggs along this coast) and Manialtepec lagoon is a peaceful getaway.

TIMOTHY RICE

• Royal Maeva, PO Box 277, Bahias de Huatulco, Oaxaca 70989, Mexico. Until April 6, a double room costs US\$120 per person per day, all-inclusive. Variable according to season.



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Answers from page 27
ASHRAM
(c) In India, a place of religious retreat, sanctuary, or hermitage. Hence *ashram*, an occupant of an ashram. From the Sanskrit *āśram* to, towards *āśram*, exertion, earnest endeavour. "The traditional ashram is built of wattle and mud, and its roofs are of leaves."

DOSSY
(b) Stylish, smart. Hence *dossily*. Cf. the Scottish *doss* neat, spruce, dossie small, neat, a well-dressed person. "What with the ladies' bonnets and blokes' dossy hats."

GOMPA
(b) A Tibetan temple or monastery. From the Tibetan and Jäschke *gön-pa*, a solitary place, a hermitage. The monastery is named in Tibetan *gön-pa*, vulgarly *Gön-pa*, or a solitary place or hermitage; and most monasteries are situated at least some distance off from villages."

BUCKEEEN
(a) A female aboriginal Indian in Guyana. From the Guyana Dutch *bokie*, the female of *bok* or buck. "They called her a buckeeen; how much prettier than the word *squaw*."

مكتبة من الأصل

Jane Reed finds that life is never too short to stuff a mushroom during a cookery course in southern Italy

Lessons from pasta masters

So you went all that way just to buy this Italian cookbook?" said the nephew, flicking through it dismissively. It was Sunday. As usual I was cooking lunch at home for him, the nieces, the wives, boyfriends, their friends and as many of the family who were up.

I opened the oven door and a gust of steam filled the kitchen. "Well? What is it then?" said one, sniffing the air. "Agnello e patate al forno." There was a pause. "That's just roast lamb and potatoes," said the one who did a GCSE in menu Italian. "Yes," I said.

Well, it was. But I hoped they would notice the difference. This was a Puglian-style roast lamb and potatoes, a dish of the region of Puglia which I had just visited on a week's cookery course at great expense with one of the nieces and an old friend.

I had to admit that what was on the serving plate didn't look exactly cordon bleu. Puglian food is rustic, no doubt about it. No towers of moussemes, eleganti jas or coulis. This was just cubes of lean lamb that fell apart at the touch of a fork, with chunks of waxily, roasted potatoes, little roasted tomatoes, breadcrumb-grated pecorino, finely chopped fresh oregano, rosemary and flat-leaf parsley, the obligatory drizzle of olive oil, some white wine and water, in the oven for a little over an hour. "Now that's what I call local culture," sighed the niece's partner, who as of this minute will inherit my entire fortune. "You can keep all the museums, galleries and churches. This is what you go abroad for."

I suppose the success of a cookery-course holiday has to be judged by the quality of the subsequent eating. If so, this holiday was a triumph. With



FACT FILE

■ Italian Cookery Weeks, PO Box 2482, London NW10 1HW (0171-401 8763/0181-208 0112). Courses are held in Umbria between May 11 and July 29 and in Puglia between Aug 24 and Oct 2. There are 16-20 places available each week and group and single bookings are welcome. The cost is £1,050pp, including return flights from London, seven nights accommodation, food and wine, a one-day excursion, airport transfers in Italy (or £923 excluding flights).

praise like that — and more for the *pesci ripiene*, made by the niece who travelled with me — you tend to forgive things like no hot water, not enough hands-on cooking or explanation about the region.

And yes, I would have liked to know more about Puglia in the heel of Italy and its contents because it was different. Olive groves from the distant hills to the water's edge; stone walls, small fields, more olives. It's not as developed as it would be farther north. The Puglian mentality centres on *domani* — they

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the friend and I expected it would be all women — and it wasn't. There was Betty and her daughters, of course. Betty, 76, is very pretty, tall and slim with thick white, bobbed hair, and this was her third time in Puglia.

The young Scottish couple

are accountant and systems analyst respectively. They tried to book the room beautifully photographed in the brochure for the course at La Spagnola, but discovered it was used exclusively by Susanna Gelmetti, the course's inspiration and executive cook. They were disappointed and would have taken off after a few days had we not all got on so well.

There were two rather similar, attractive couples from the home counties. They knew a lot about cooking and eating out. They had productive gardens and went on mushroom- and truffle-hunting weeks. One of the husbands broke out of the mould and joined the "boys behaving badly" group, about which more later.

Then there were the Swedish ladies from Wimbledon and Malmo, and the retired headmistress, Elizabeth, who we all called Myrtle (don't ask).

Eighteen of us in all, with some common threads. We were all interested in food, liked cooking, and clearly knew rather a lot about it. Liked eating out and could

swap restaurants and recipes.

So watching Susanna press *soave* into cake tins for half an hour on the first evening left us all a little flat. But with that unquenchable British spirit, we made light of it in a mustn't-grumble sort of way.

We made light of the many small irritations of any holiday: we laughed a lot, did the conga round the pizza oven,

played practical jokes, got merry on orange-coloured Campari cocktails. We diligently rolled wafer-thin slices of grilled courgette around little chunks of salty local cheese and stuffed endless arrays of fruit and vegetables. The Puglian way of life is not too short to stuff a mushroom like you see, or a corgi, or an submarine, or a tomato...

But it was the sexy way Tonino (the local chef and restaurant owner who worked alongside Susanna) in one fluid movement smashed the garlic with the flat of his knife, then chopped it, the tip of the knife never leaving the chopping board, that made us breathe a little faster, and the tips (or 'teeps' as they became known) that we picked up from Tonino, Susanna and the other guests.

Susanna is a rather dramatic 34-year-old Italian of, I think, grand parentage but who seems to have spent much of her childhood in the kitchen.

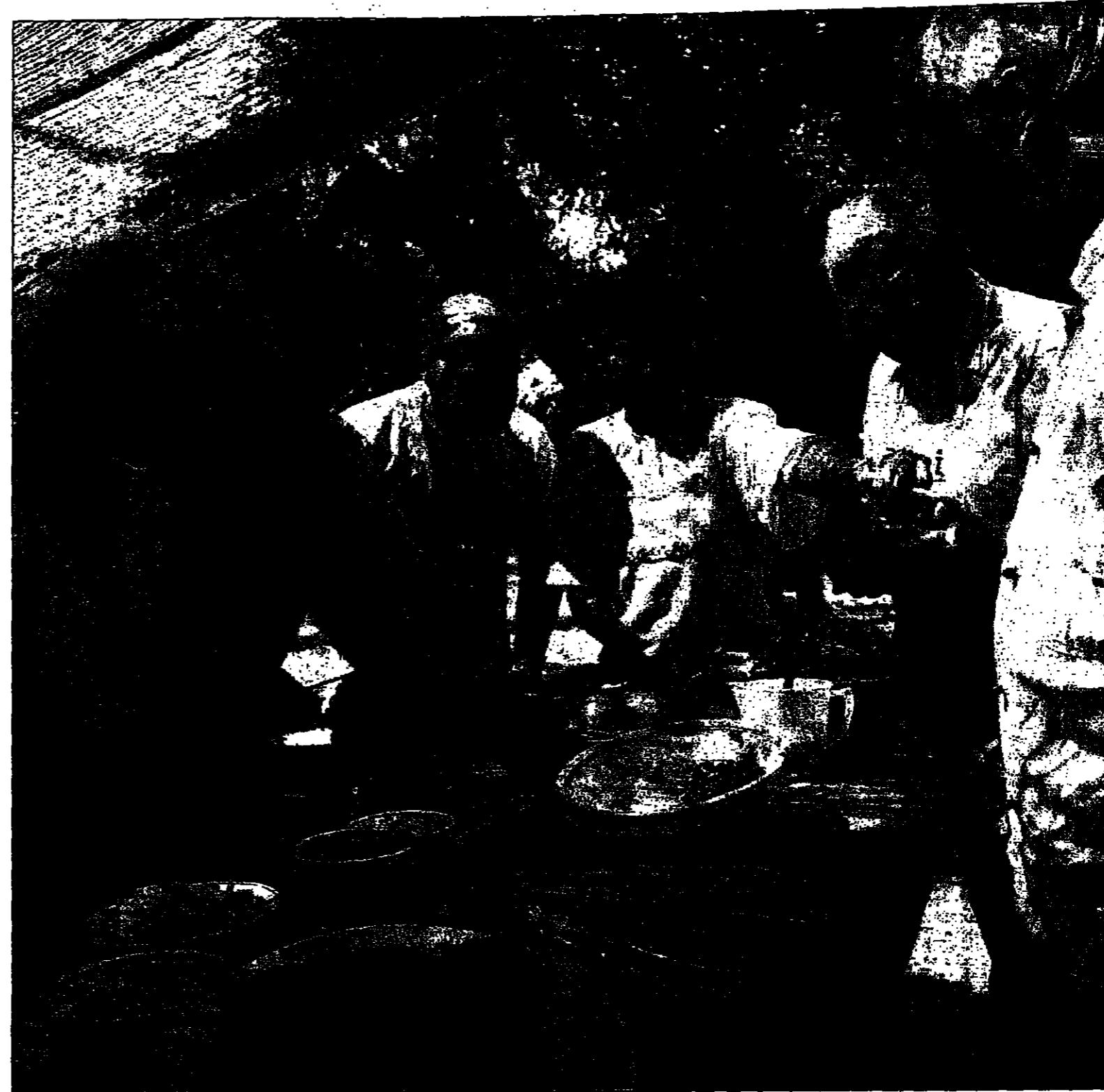
A journalist, she found a backing in London for a scheme that would blend her passion for cooking with a yearning to explain to the world the many blessings of the Italian lifestyle. Six years ago after she opened her first cookery school in Umbria, she opened another in Puglia. This one is a very different kind of school — more rustic, very informal, more a holiday than a cookery course. You are invited to purchase Susanna's excellent book and a very reasonable five-litre can of olive oil at the end of the week.

Our day went like this after breakfast we watched Susanna and Tonino cook lunch, with occasional help from us. After lunch we slept; then we bundled into mini-vans to visit places of local interest, and finally returned to watch Tonino cook our supper.

The best trip was a day out in the old city of Lecce, to see the renowned food market, the roccoco cathedral and to picnic in a city park. The local dog-walkers are used to seeing these crazy English people every Wednesday laying out a table with *frittata*, rice salad, wine, crusty bread, and grapes bought in the market. I think we sang in the coach going home. The Swedes have a bouncy and peculiar road song about sitting in the back of cars and hoping not to crash.

"Home" was a 15th-century castle, La Spagnola, crumbling and beautiful and highly recommended in a book on bed and breakfast in Italy, its chapels and storerooms now converted into ensuite rather minimalist bedrooms (with rather minimalist plumbing). You remember the castle in the last scene of the last *Godfather* film where he falls off his chair, dead? Well, La Spagnola was a bit like that, very tragic.

You want to know about the boys behaving badly? Well, the first night Simon, Mark, Neil and Chris played bar football until dawn and drank anything they could find in the terrace bar — a heady combination of Coke, Campari, beer, wine, peach nectar, strange brandies — with a few hangovers and chef Tonino. At 5am Tonino, by all accounts, suddenly got up, donned his chef's whites, laid a perfect table and made them all spaghetti in truffle oil with chillies. Just like that. They came into class the next day clutching heads, herb teas, jugs of water and blue chins. And then did it again the next night. Their women were, of course, very tolerant, smiling sweetly between gritted teeth as they jabbed their rolled courgettes with cocktail sticks.



Recipe for success: cookery enthusiasts listen attentively as a guest chef shows them the tricks of the trade, using ingredients they bought themselves



Lecce's many charms include a splendid roccoco cathedral

swap restaurants and recipes.

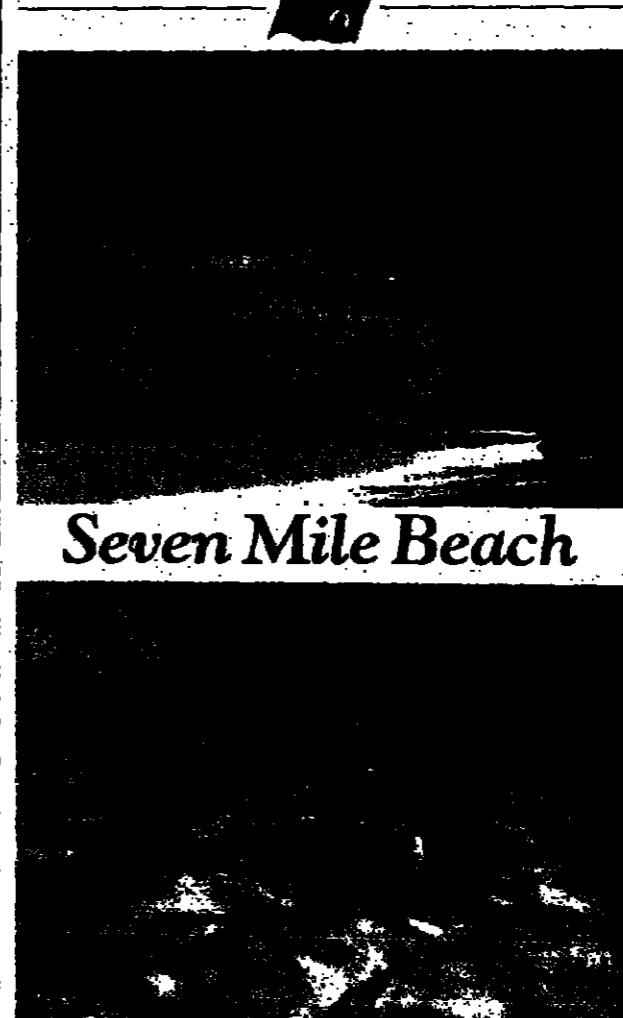
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Seven Mile Beach



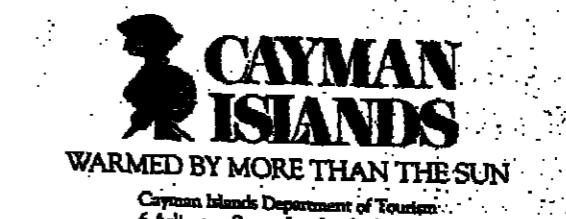
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WEEKEND · SATURDAY FEBRUARY 22 1997

Switzerland: Shaken but not stirred, the skiing village of Grindelwald once played host to James Bond

One more gluhwein before I hit the slopes



For a weekend skiing with a touch of class you cannot beat the Swiss mountain village resort of Grindelwald. Tucked between the feet of the Eiger, Jungfrau and Wetterhorn mountains, Grindelwald and the surrounding area have more than 270km of ski runs. These include the slopes of the Jungfrau, Mount First, Männlichen and, 30 minutes' drive away, the mighty Schilthorn. It also offers skiers of all levels plenty to choose from — not to mention stunning views, fine hotels and enjoyable après-ski.

Last year saw the start of the Swiss airline Air Engiadina's flights from London's City Airport to Bern. This allows you to depart from Docklands in London at 8.05am and arrive in Bern in under two hours. Another hour's drive to the hotel in Grindelwald, and you can be on the slopes by just after 1pm.

The resort has a selection of places to stay but if you want to spoil yourself the five-star Grand Hotel Regina is a must. Situated across the street from the Jungfrau railway station, the starting point for many spectacular excursions through the region, the hotel enjoys a central position in the village. It also has a colourful history (former guests include the Beatles, Margaret Thatcher and a "canaveral" of NASA astronauts) and a splendid restaurant — I recommend the bouillabaisse.

The people of Grindelwald pride themselves on the region's outstanding natural beauty and a key to this clean pollution-free environment is the Jungfraubahn, a cog railway that runs the 12km (straight through the Eiger and Mönch mountains) to the Jungfraujoch, Europe's highest railway station at about 11,333ft above sea level. Here you will find the Sphinx meteorological station, Ice Palace and restaurant as well as views across the awesome Aletsch glacier. The glacier looks pristine and deceptively inviting but temperatures can drop to -20C.

Two stops below the Jungfrau summit, 40 minutes above Grindelwald, is Kleine Scheidegg, the centre for all ski activity on the Jungfrau. Based at the foot of the notorious Eiger, Kleine Scheidegg is the hub for more than 98km of ski runs and a colourful encampment for many a gluhwein bar. This is vital to warm the cockles and to supply that essential courage only the Dutch know so well.

A 30-minute drive from Grindelwald and then 30 minutes again in a four-stop cable-car and you arrive at the Schilthorn summit. At 9,900ft above sea level is the restaurant made famous for its role



Kleine Scheidegg, high above Grindelwald, is based at the foot of the Eiger and is the centre for more than 98km of ski runs; it also accommodates many a cosy gluhwein bar



Views from the Eiger

in the James Bond film *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. Taking lunch in the solar-powered, revolving restaurant, which moves through 360 degrees in one hour, affords majestic views over Mont Blanc, the Bernese Alps and the Black Forest on Germany's central plain. Naturally, I chose a vodka martini for my aperitif.

Shaken but not stirred, intrepid skiers can set forth on an excellent black run through a testing field of moguls that starts just outside the restaurant. After a mile or so the moguls disappear and merge into the gentler slopes of Birg, the next cable-car stop down from the Schilthorn, which provides calmer skiing.

The slopes on the Schilthorn, all 50km of them, open at 9.30am but beginner and intermediate skiers will find the skiing here a little more challenging than on the Jungfrau. The only drawback to the Schilthorn is the T-bar lift at the bottom of the Engstal run

PERRY
CLEVELAND-PECK

beneath Birg. It is more demanding than the ski down and calls for better technique. As on the Jungfrau, skilifts close at 4.30pm.

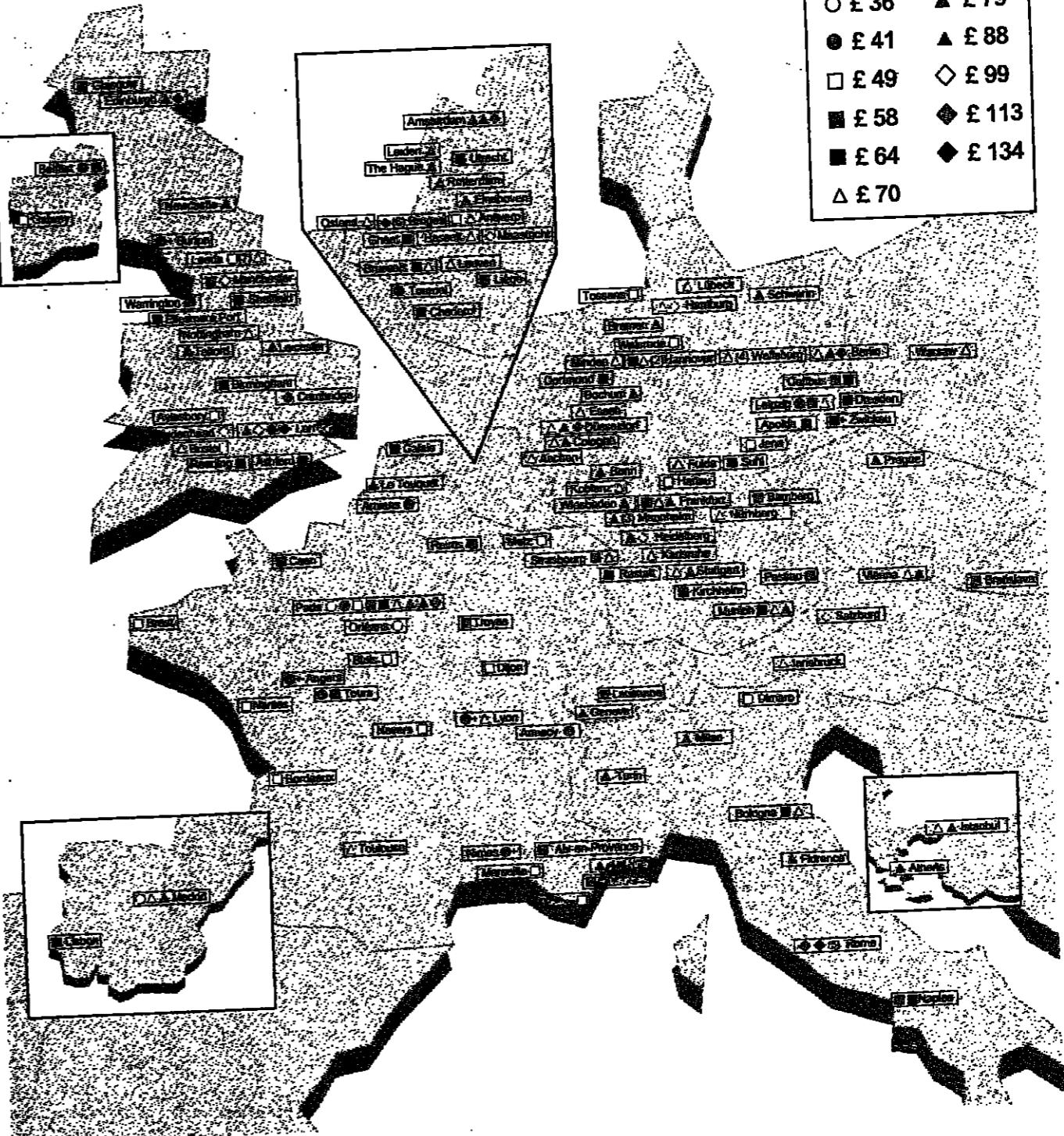
The après-ski in Grindelwald includes the usual collection of shops, bars, restaurants and clubs. The Old Spotted Cat club (turn right out of the Grand Hotel Regina and walk 500 yards up the main street) opens early and closes late, providing skiers with the chance to dance away any remaining energy until the small hours.

One activity that must be attempted is the Bussalp sledge-run every Sunday evening. The organisers provide the sledges and coaches leave from Grindelwald's central square, next to the ice sculptures, between 7.30pm and 9pm. After a traditional and amply fortified fondue, the hardy travellers straddle their mounts and sledge the four miles back to Grindelwald.

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INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL TIPS**Fantasies in Marrakesh**

A CAMEL, a mini-maze, swinging beds and an olive press to make your own oil are just a few of the extras that come with CV Travel's (0171-589 0132) exotic offerings in Marrakesh, Morocco. The villa, the *Verger de l'Essaï*, flanks an oasis of palms just outside the city, is an eccentric 1,001 nights fantasy of nooks and crannies, salons and terraces, a yellow garden with lemon trees, grapefruit and yellow flowers, blue and white gardens and mosaic pool. Two cooks prepare Moroccan and international dishes, and staff will help guests cope with the melee of Marrakesh. The villa sleeps up to 16 and costs £5,250 per week.

Beside a 20-mile lake near Ouarzazate and part of a golf club development (a favourite game with the King), *Kasbah du Lac* is a villa well placed for trekking, riding in the Atlas Mountains and exploring the desert area of Zagora. It costs from £1,000 per week for ten people.

Among CV Travel's other new properties, *Torre Trasita* (pictured, right), perched above the Amalfi coast at Positano, is a circular 14th-century Saracen tower converted to three apartments each costing from £405 per week, plus fares.

Faster tracks

WORK on the first £17 billion phase of the TGV-Est high-speed railway line from Paris to Alsace will start early next year with the 270-kilometre section to Vandières, south of Metz, due for completion in 2004. This will reduce the present four-hour journey from Paris to Strasbourg to two hours 30 minutes, Reims to 45 minutes and Nancy and Metz to one hour 30 minutes. The TGV-Est will also bring journey times between Paris and Frankfurt down to three hours 40, to Munich to four hours 50, and to Berlin to six hours 30.

Dubrovnik day

THE first British carrier to operate to Dubrovnik airport since 1991 is the charter airline Palmar (01202 299299). It will fly there from Bournemouth on March 5 for a special day trip costing £159 to include a guided tour of the city. Flight time is three hours.

I found it a harrowing experience to walk the city's mellow walls recently to check on restoration work of damage suffered during the siege between October 1991 and May 1993 (on December 6 alone, 600 shells fell on the city); the shrapnel holes in the Stradun, one of the world's finest high streets, are now undetectable, with roofs, fountains and facades restored and many hotels up and running. Palmar will also offer week-long holidays in Dubrovnik in September from £399 half-board at the Hotel Excelsior.

Greek treks

MOUNTAIN biking in the Mani, river trekking, walking, wading, swimming and canyoning (absolutely past waterfalls) in the southern Pindos, and exploring lesser-known islands by rubber inflatable, are among the adventure holidays in off-the-beaten-track Greece offered by Sunvil Holidays (0181-568 4499). These are run in conjunction with Trekking Hellas, founded by Greek mountain guides ten years ago, the first Greek agency to specialise in adventure tourism.

A week-long Zodiac Adventure explores home waters of the legendary Odysseus around Ithaca, Meganissi and Kalamos, with three nights camping on more remote islands. The trip, including flights and half-board, costs £675 and can be combined with other Greek holidays.

Stay in touch

“CANT make Delhi”, “Let's meet in Beijing”, “Need more money” — a system of keeping in touch with family and friends travelling the world is offered by Travellers' Connections (0181-286 3065). Subscribers are allocated their own numbers and security codes giving access to their own mailbox to collect voice messages left by relatives and friends. Normal telephones can be used, and the cost of the mailbox is £15 for one month, up to £75 for a year.

Classic cars

AMONG the festivities to celebrate the 700th anniversary of Monaco and the Grimaldi dynasty, classic cars will race through Monte Carlo on the Grand Prix circuit a week before the big race on May 11. Past winner Stirling Moss is to drive in the race for cars of 1954-1960 vintage, and other races will feature the cars that carried Graham Hill to five wins.



Torre Trasita, a 14th-century Saracen tower near Positano, now converted into three apartments

Spring trips

BARGAIN prices from March to the end of May from Kuoni's Limited Editions (01306 740500) include five nights B&B in Sri Lanka for £389 (the rainy season starts around the end of April); seven nights in Cancun, Mexico, for £449 and seven nights in Luxor, Egypt, from £299 B&B.

Horse work

HORSE-DRAWN caravan holidays for two people through Ireland's Kerry countryside cost from £265 per week per person including ferry crossing, with any

additional passengers going free. Food for the horse is extra, about £10 per beast.

A one-week Shannon River self-drive cruise for two costs from £235 per person, again with additional passengers going free. Fuel is extra. Both from Cresta Holidays (0990 561814).

Egyptian opera

VERDI'S *Aida* is to be performed opposite the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut in Luxor, Egypt, October 12-19. The price of tickets for the opera will be from £94-£188, except for the opening night when they cost £125-£188. Reservations from the Cairo Opera House (00

202 342 0501). For further information telephone the Egyptian Tourist Office in London (0171-493 5282).

Do it yourself

FORTY-EIGHT largely self-catering properties in England and Wales are offered in a special brochure from the YHA (01727 845047). Many are on the coast, others are located in the countryside or cities. A family of four can have a week's stay at Conwy in North Wales for a total of £231, while two nights in a hostel near St Paul's in London will cost £149, including breakfast. YHA membership is necessary.

Rough guides and smooth

The latest guidebooks offer advice on everything from caterpillars to yak milk

Guidebooks are fluttering down like autumn leaves in Vallombrosa (just outside Florence) and praised by Milton, whom I have just quoted, comes into *Walking and Eating in Tuscany and Umbria*, an excellent practical guide to routes and local food by two energetic walkers, James Lasdun and Pia Davis (Per-

guin, £8.99). The *Rough Guide* series has spread its wings recently, with new or revised books on Cyprus and Vietnam (£9.99 each), Nepal, Hawaii, Peru and Guatemala & Belize (all £10.99), Kenya and Zimbabwe & Botswana (both these with a wildlife guide in colour, at £11.99) and a fat volume on India at £14.99.

This series has always provided the smooth as well as the rough, it gives expert advice on cheap ways of travelling, but does not miss out on possibilities of greater comfort, and is thorough and accurate on history and art, assuming that all its readers want that. A good example is Greg Ward's account, in the new volume on Hawaii, of the recent "Polynesian Renaissance" of the canoe, with boats going again against the islands with the blessing of Maori elders.

Peru (£10.99) also appears, along with Tunis (£10.99), and Andalucia and Laos (£9.99 each), in another good series of slightly earlier vintage, the *Footprint Handbooks*. These are sturdy hardbacks, generally more traditional in approach than the *Rough Guide* but crammed with reliable information. In Andalucia, Rowland Mead includes not only the Holy Week processions in Seville, but also the processions of poison-hair caterpillars which sometimes cross the roads and tracks in spring, with advice on what to tell the chemist if you happen to touch one.

A successful series in the past few years has been the *Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kits*. Newly published is a revised edition of its volume on Egypt (£11.99, with up-to-date information on the tombs and other archaeological sites that tourists go to Egypt to see, and an illustrated survey of the local gods and goddesses).



GUIDE BOOKS

Lonely Planet also publishes *Language Survival Kits*, additions to which include a *Nepali Phrasebook*, *Ukrainian Phrasebook* and *Malay Phrasebook* (£3.99 each). You can ask how to say "I am a postgraduate" in Ukraine. There is also a *Rough Guide Phrasebook of Vietnamese* (£3.50), which will enable you to order snails cooked with spices and banana. Travellers want to get the most out of their holidays these days.

This Way Travel Guides are short, pocket-size books in as they say, "sunny yellow" covers. There is a new one on *Sardinia*, cheap and cheerful at £2.99. The travel publisher Bradt has brought out a new edition of *Australia and New Zealand by Rail* by Colin Taylor (£10.95). This is a comprehensive account of the rail network, with suggested itineraries through, for example, the Queensland rainforest or past the canyons of the Blue Mountains. It also lists all the special cheap passes, such as the Westrail Premier Discovery Pass (which is not valid, we are carefully informed, for the special Wildflower coach tours).

Such amenities were unknown to the users of the books described in Alan Silfie's *Leading The Blind: A Century of Guidebook Travel, 1815-1915* (Papermac, £9). From Baedeker, Murray and other guidebooks, Silfie has put together a delightful picture of travel in those years, with such contemporary tips as that in small Swiss hotels: "Wine is often a source of much vexation. The ordinary table wines are sometimes so bad that the traveller is compelled to drink those of a more expensive class, which indeed is the very aim and object of the landlord." This observation may still be true today.

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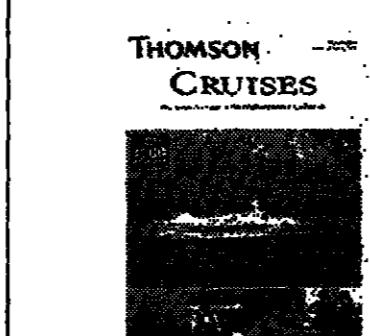
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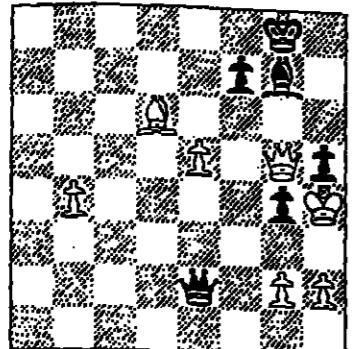
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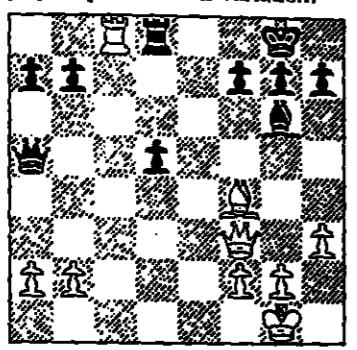
by Raymond Keene

I published this first position on October 26 last year. It is from the game Prazak-Widkowski, Tarnov 1979. Can you spot White's neat move, which brought the game to a successful conclusion for him?



Solution: 1 Bf8
Mr Francis of Essex wonders why Black cannot now force mate starting with 1... Qf2+. This would lead to mate if White now played 2 g3, allowing 2... Qd2+, but 2 Kd8+ Black's defences.

The second position was set as a Winning Move on June 27 last year. It is from the game Karpov-Timman, Amsterdam 1991. White would like to play 1 Bc7, forking queen and rook, but Black can then reply 1... Qe1+. How can White, to play, improve on this variation?



Solution: 1 b4! Qb6 2 Bc7 Rxc3 3 Bxb6 axb6 4 Qxd5, and White, with the advantage of queen against rook and bishop, went on to win.

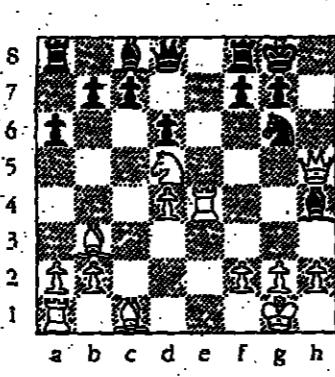
Mr Mukherjee of Calcutta now tries to improve on White's play with 1 Qc3 Qb6 2 Qe3 with the ideas 2... Qe3 3 Rxd8+ and 2... Qf6 3 Qe8+. However, 2 Qe3 is met by 2... Rxc3 and Black will emerge a rook ahead.

WINNING MOVE

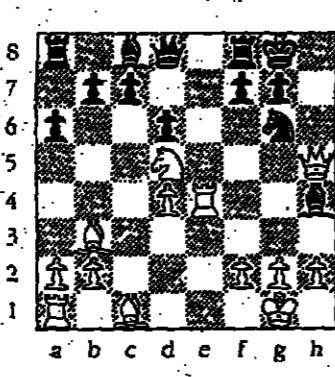
By Raymond Keene
White to play. This position is a possible variation from the game Anand - Ivanchuk, Las Palmas 1996. How does White make the most of his concentration force around the black king?

Send your answer on a postcard to *The Times*, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. The first correct solution drawn on Thursday will receive a year's subscription to the Staunton Society, which includes a free invitation to the annual dinner at Simpson's-in-the-Strand. The answer will be published next Saturday.

Last week's solution: 1 Nf5 (1... Bxf2 2 Bxf2)



Last week's winner: G Stanton, Redditch, Worcestershire.



Last week's winner: G Stanton, Redditch, Worcestershire.



Last week's winner: G Stanton, Redditch, Worcestershire.

READERS are invited to write an amusing caption for the cartoon (right), from *The Strand Magazine* (reproduced from Westminster Libraries, Sherlock Holmes Collection, Marylebone Library).

The cartoon will be printed again next week with a caption from those submitted.

Send caption suggestions on a postcard with your name and address to *Strand Caption* 40, Weekend, *The Times*, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN.

The Editor's decision is final. The closing date for entries is Wednesday, February 26.

PUNCHLINE

YOU WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, MR RAYNER?



WORD-WATCHING

By Philip Howard

ASHRAM
a. A Blackface Tupp
b. A Tamil dialect
c. A shrine

DOSSY
a. An open-air bed
b. Near
c. Money

GOMPA
a. A grandfather
b. A shrine
c. Rice meal

BUCKEEEN
a. An aboriginal woman
b. A hind
c. To scrape a ship's bottom

Answers on page 19



"It's an old smuggling trick I learnt at Sotheby's"

The winning caption for last week's cartoon (above) was submitted by D. Till of Leek, Staffordshire

COMPUTER GAMES AND PASTIMES

by Tim Wapshott



Games on the Great Word Adventure 1 are great fun and a good teaching aid

*My poem's pretty Basic
I don't express myself too well
But Bill may have my Word
That together we'll Excel
Offers of marriage, alongside
swipes, came from both sexes. Eric
Spelman of Essex, wrote:
Bill, please be my Valentine
We'll share the Road Ahead
Delete that young Melinda's file
Then you and I can wed*

who sent their hard earned
to you, before you gave
them version two.

But not for free — I hear the
tills ring up a lot more dollar
bills.

You found the secret to
your riches, is selling pro-
grammes full of glitches.

So when it came to version
five, you were the richest man
alive.

But now, dear Bill, I'm in a
fix, I can't afford your version
six.

Dear Bill, if you would
marry me, I could get all your
software free.

Please open up, my Gates
of Heaven, it surely will be
version seven.

The most commonly recur-
ring rhyme was "till" with
"Bill", though Gareth Jones,

of Windermere, Cumbria, went
several steps further in Ode to Bill:
It's all just jealousy, Bill,
of your tron will, Bill.

They rant and rave
about the way you behave,
but we haven't had our fill, Bill.
You promised us the world, Bill.
And yet we wait here still, Bill.

We've suffered Windows 95,
as Apple struggled to survive.

and that's a bitter pill, Bill.
It's a bitter twist of fates, Gates.
That with all your computer
mates, Gates.

You can't provide a better
way to type a letter,
or handle particular dates,
Gates.

I gave up my Mac for you, Bill,
A better product still, Bill.
But now with several billions,
you're a guru to millions.

We love the ringing of that till,
Bill.

Robert Taylor of Surrey, gave
Bill's love a millennium ultimatum
with his entry:

Are you preparing, my dear
Valentine,
the software to keep you forever
mine

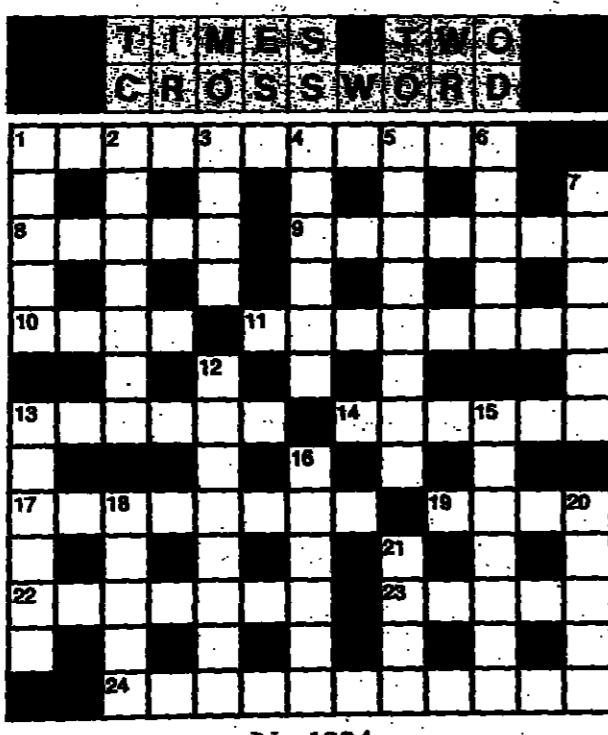
I don't want to crash
nor lose all my cash
at midnight on 31/12/99.

More entries next week. Also to
come, details of the winner whose
pose wins them a Polaroid digital
camera worth £2,650.

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THE LISTENER CROSSWORD

No 3398: All Square by Dimitry



No 1024

ACROSS

- 1 Psychological battle (3,2,6)
- 2 W H —, poet (5)
- 3 Mass slaughter (7)
- 4 Crease; animal pen (4)
- 5 Paintstaining (8)
- 6 Fuss; trivial objection (6)
- 7 Star group, may be spiral (6)
- 8 Odds-against competitor (8)
- 9 To spring (4)
- 10 Pungent gas, NH3 (7)
- 11 Of the same value (5)
- 12 A vegetable casserole (11)
- 13 Wittenberg (11)
- 14 Switch (5)
- 15 Lubber (5)
- 16 Adverb (5)
- 17 Swallow (5)
- 18 Swish (5)
- 19 Spring (5)
- 20 Pungent gas, NH3 (7)
- 21 Of the same value (5)
- 22 Vegetable casserole (11)
- 23 Wittenberg (11)
- 24 Star group, may be spiral (6)

SOLUTION TO NO 1023.

ACROSS: 1 Switch 5 Swig 9 Swaddle 10 Sweden 11 Vehement 12 Lubber 15 Adverb 18 Swallow 20 Swance 22 Swish 23 Sway 24 Swarms

DOWN: 2 Wittenberg 3 Traverse 4 Hedge 6 Wayne 7 Grieve 8 Pestle 13 Brassica 14 Obsess 16 Dowse 17 Anthur 19 Amans 21 Nova

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How to get ahead on bikes, and the new Triumphs
Pages 3, 10



SATURDAY FEBRUARY 22 1997

The hunt is on for our top company driver
Page 5



Many drivers risk lives by failing to secure their pets, warns Simon Hacker in the run-up to Cruft's

Deadly danger of unrestrained dogs



Cages and harnesses are recommended by experts

As 20,000 dogs and their loving owners prepare to converge on Cruft's 1997 next month, some bad news: no matter how affectionate and even-tempered your canine friend, as a car passenger it can maim or kill both itself and you.

It's not Fido's fault. But an unsecured dog in the back of a car becomes an extreme danger in the event of an accident. Colliding with a solid object when driving at the urban speed limit creates the same force of deceleration used to test safety belts in a crash simulator. But while the seatbelted driver may be abruptly restrained in a crash, an unsecured 50lb dog sitting

in the back of the car will continue flying forwards. Multiply the hapless dog's body weight by what accident researchers term a "pulse" of 20G, and a three-and-a-half-stone adult Springer Spaniel is transformed into an unguided missile propelled by a whopping 1,000ft/lbs of kinetic energy.

Although the vast majority of Cruft's Show contenders will be nursed to Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre in the relative safety of harnesses, padded boxes and cages, the parcel-shelf poodle and lap-top Labrador are still common features of driving life. Two years into her job, trainee veterinary nurse Jess White from Gloucestershire has already seen her fair share of road-related pet injuries, but a crash in which her own whippet, Dudley, died has made her an avid spokeswoman for dog safety.

"I was driving in my Mini at about 60mph when another vehicle pulled out on me," she recalls. "Dudley, who was 12, was sitting on the back seat when we crashed. I suffered head injuries; he broke his neck. But he didn't die immediately and was in terrible pain. I wouldn't let the ambulance take me away until the vet had

arrived. I learnt my lesson the hard way: you should always choose a car with rear belts and fit a proper dog harness to the belt."

Mike Dickison, group leader for body engineering and safety at the Motor Industry Research Association's laboratories, says a hatchback or estate car with fold-down rear seats can be less likely to stop loose objects flying about in an impact, because the seats buckle under pressure. But the good news is that the introduction of centre three-point belts in place of lap belts has resulted in greater strength.

"The seats have been reinforced for the fifth belt and are less likely to collapse under the same strain. So if your dog is behind the seat, it will stand a better chance," says Dickison.

The magazine, *Dogs Today*, is campaigning to make dog safety a bigger issue among carmakers.

"Manufacturers might be good at designing cup holders, but they tend to develop a blind spot for four-legged passengers," explains editor Beverley Cuddy.

"Volvo is making extraordinary efforts. For the 850 saloon, there's a cage area which allows you to fold a seat down and keep your dog in the boot, but the dog can still see you, so everyone's happy. Apart from Volvo, though, no one else seems to be bothered."

Given that a quarter of UK households have dogs, carmakers need to wake up, says Cuddy. "They're quick to use dogs to beautify their brochures, but that's about as far as it goes. We tell our readers to take their dogs with them when they go for a test drive."

The RSPCA recommends harnesses, particularly for small dogs. Spokeswoman Justine Pannett says, "It's important that the restraint is fitted to the dog's body and not a collar. For bigger dogs, we recommend a guard to stop the animal from falling forwards."



Without a modern, strongly mounted harness, a dog like Vesper would become an unguided missile in a collision

The RAC, however, has doubts about conventional dog guards. Safety spokesman Kevin Delaney feels a guard might actually increase injury risks. "A guard might prevent Fido from hopping into the front, but it's pretty useless for restraining a big dog in a crash. If it comes free, you have the added problem of the guard, as well as your dog, heading your way. The last thing you want immediately after a collision is for both dog and guard to rearrange themselves around the back of your head."

But that doesn't mean don't restrain your dog. "It's utter madness to let small dogs stand or sit on the parcel shelf," Delaney says. "When you brake sharply, the dog is likely to end up embedded under the front seat. In a head-on — and if it doesn't take out half of your skull on the way — it will hit the windscreen. And any dog left to wander loose in the back of any car is lethal baggage."

The Department of Transport says it has not researched restraints for dogs, but points to the Highway Code for guidance.

"Section 213 of the code stresses the need to keep animals under control and to make sure they are not a distraction to the driver, so an unrestrained dog could be judged by police as driving without due care and attention," says a spokesman.

Car insurers have no guidelines or stipulations for dog owners, and pet insurers such



Bentley's Cocker Spaniels are happy to ride in cages

How to quell a Boxer rebellion

TRISHA BENTLEY, whose Cocker Spaniel, Albert, was overall winner at Cruft's in 1996, believes different dogs require different restraints. Albert and her nine other Cocker Spaniels are happy to ride in wire cages in the back of her Ford Escort. But Vesper, a prize Boxer bitch, just won't entertain being stashed at the back of the car.

Says Trisha: "Vesper panics and she has to be closer to me, so she sits on the back seat and wears a restraining Hi-Craft harness which attaches to the safety belt."

"It is important that dog owners think before they set out on a journey and that they keep the wellbeing of their dogs in mind. A dog is a member of the family."



Harness supporter Jess White lost Dudley, above, in a crash

as Hill House Hammond do not insist upon cages or harnesses being fitted.

Some per-product specialists, however, suggest more dogs are killed in the panic following a crash than during the crash itself. Geoff Caldwell, managing director of Barjo Kennel Systems, believes an unrestrained dog will jump through a broken window and often into the path of other traffic. Barjo designs

wire mesh cages which are custom made to fit most models of estate car. A standard cage sells for £135.

"The key is to protect your dog from injury, protect you from your dog, and protect anyone attempting to rescue you from a distressed and potentially dangerous animal," says Caldwell.

Cruft's Show starts on March 6 at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham.

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Taxing road-use is a money-raising stunt that won't make more motorists travel to the office by rail — drivers will just avoid the motorways instead

Road tolls are a ding-dong idea

My part of the country is now regarded as being in the M4 corridor, a term lovingly used by estate agents to convince people that an area is within daily commuting distance of London. And indeed there are plenty of people in my area who do commute to London every day; you can identify them by the bags under their eyes.

An off-peak standard-class return ticket from Chippenham, my nearest main-line station, to Paddington now costs £31.50. The same return journey by car is about 200 miles and in an average car will use, at most, six gallons of fuel. In Chippenham, unleaded petrol costs about £2.86 a gallon, therefore the fuel cost of the journey is £17.16.

The last time the Government

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION



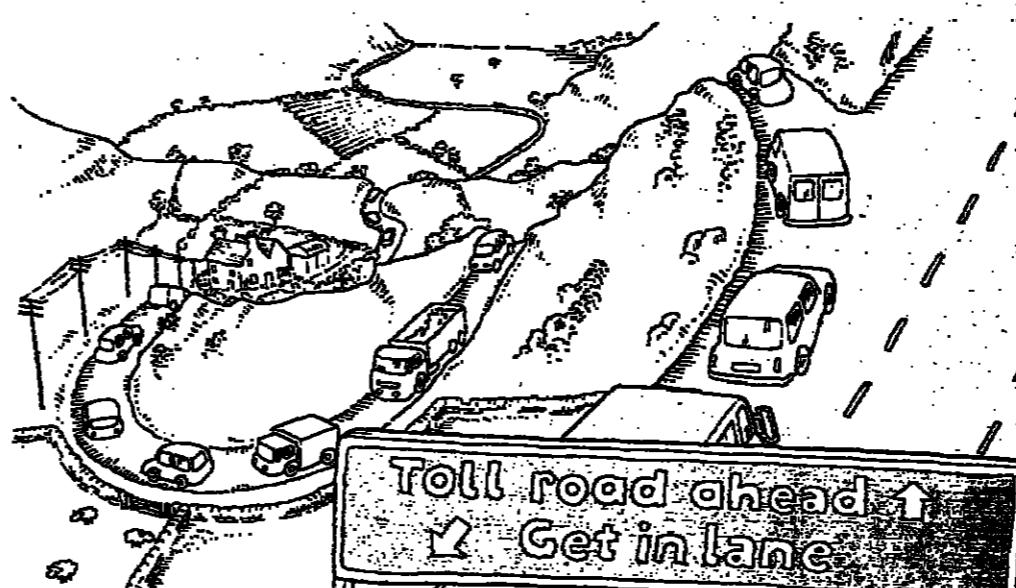
Peter Barnard

costed road pricing, it reckoned that cars would pay 1.5p per mile for motorway journeys. Thus the aforementioned round-trip would set us back £3 in tolls at the very most. Add that to the fuel cost and we have a grand total of £20.16. So, even using the cheapest return rail

fare as a comparison, the journey is more than £11 cheaper by road than it is by rail.

This week *The Times* reported that the Government is pressing ahead with trials of a "ray-gun" device to collect road tolls. The nominal purpose of tolls is to make motorists pay for the cost of road improvements, even though we already pay the Treasury far more than we get back in road spending. But the secondary purpose of tolls is to make motoring more expensive and thus force us to use the railways.

Before you rush for the word processor or the writing paper, I know that motorists are living in dreamland if they think the only cost of travelling by car is the fuel. Surveys have shown that the real, overall cost of motoring is quite high but there is a central fallacy in



those figures: they imply that if we went to work by rail, we would not own a car at all.

Of course we would. It would do less mileage if we travelled by rail to work, suggesting a higher residual value and fewer repairs, but then we would be likely to keep the car longer. So by the time we came to trade it in, the car would

be worth no more than if we were swapping a newer one with the same mileage.

Railway advocates also suffer from convenient amnesia about the fact that just as car journeys cost more than the petrol, rail journeys cost more than the ticket. Before the railways were privatised, taxpayers were subsidising them to the tune of £1 billion a year. Now, the subsidy has doubled to £2 billion a year. We are paying twice as much not to own the railways as we paid to own them, though the subsidy is supposed to reduce and eventually disappear over the next decade.

So will road pricing get drivers off the motorways? Oh yes, definitely. The trouble is that road

pricing will not get drivers off the motorways and on to the trains, but off the motorways and on to the minor roads. If you doubt that, consider the fact that every time the toll on the older of the Severn bridges is raised, more transport firms tell their drivers to take the route through Gloucestershire that avoids the bridge.

Transport firms have already warned that road pricing (the toll would be much higher for lorries than cars) will increase the cost of goods, therefore another hidden cost is revealed: even people who do not use cars would end up paying for roads via the increased price of groceries.

No wonder that in last week's *Amalglass/CAR 97 poll*, only 16 per cent thought road tolls were the answer to congestion. The majority are no doubt also worried that once tolls arrive, their cost would inexorably rise. That would not make rail more competitive, because rail fares also rise.

Road tolls are taxation by another name, a money-raising stunt with no impact on congestion or pollution. Tolls are a wheeze for the Treasury and the people who make the technology. For ordinary motorists they are simply a cost without a benefit.

Greening our traffic

Magic mix could clean up diesel

Water, plus a secret agent, might be the answer, says Stuart Birch

Tests that could revolutionise the diesel car industry are underway in a laboratory at the high-security Millbrook automotive development centre and proving ground. A new fuel which should be no more expensive than ordinary diesel could make smoky exhausts a thing of the past.

And the wonder ingredient that makes it all possible is water — working with a secret agent. Concern about possible health risks from diesel smoke and particulates — soot blown from exhaust pipes has grown recently. But now a French-Chilean inventor, Charles Mirel, has set up a British-registered company to develop and market an emulsifying agent, codenamed **HEM** 100, which may bring ultra-clean emissions.

Mirel is trying to prove wrong the old saying that oil and water do not mix. The work at Millbrook will be completed in late March and if the figures add up, diesel fuel could gain a green halo.

News of the potential breakthrough is revealed in this month's specialist magazine *Diesel Car & Lorry*. If Mirel's claims are proved accurate it will mean that he has come up with a cheap, organic, easily manufactured agent that performs the difficult trick of creating a permanent bond between diesel fuel and water. This could be the key to a new world of cleaner, more efficient car engines," says editor John Kerswill.

"It sounds almost too good to be true and only tests and time will prove whether it is. But it looks very hopeful at present."

Mirel's work could lead to a major battle between diesel and petrol power and may reverse the recent shrinking market for diesel cars in the UK — down from a peak of 23 per cent to 18 per cent.

Kerswill says the new fuel has been researched and developed by Mirel over the past 15 years, and is a "simple" modification of normal car diesel fuel. It could be used in any car diesel engine, be it old or new.



"It may revive the market for diesel cars"

Coelho says when the water and diesel fuel emulsion enters the combustion chamber, the water flashes to superheated steam, atomising the fuel into minute droplets which can be totally burnt. "It may all sound very simple but it is a highly complex piece of chemistry. We believe **HEM** 100 could be either added to diesel fuel at the refinery or even at a filling station."

The cost of a gallon of emulsified fuel should be comparable to ordinary diesel, he says. "If a power unit was designed specifically for the new fuel the advantages would be greater. An added benefit is that the agent could be used for oil-spill dispersal."

SPECIAL PREVIEW: TWO NEW CARS UNVEILED THIS WEEK



Aircraft styling gives the Saab a tapered nose and a "cockpit" interior while retaining the curved windscreen

SAAB 9-5

Body style: four-door saloon. **Engines:** choice of turbocharged 2-litre or 2.3-litre four-cylinder, or V6 3-litre featuring a unique asymmetric turbocharger driven by exhaust from one bank of cylinders only.

Interior: will include as standard Saab's interactive head restraints designed to reduce whiplash injuries. **Price:** to be announced.

That means that one in ten executive cars sold here was a Saab. The new car will be a strong competitor for the BMW 5-Series, Audi A6, Mercedes E-class and Volvo S70. Production of the ageing 9000CD will cease when the

new car is introduced but the 9000CS model, renowned for its outstanding safety performance, will continue.

A special fifth anniversary model of the 9000CS accounted for a quarter of Saab sales last year.



All-new A6 bears a strong family resemblance to the A4, which has been Audi's standard-bearer over the past year

AUDI A6

Body-style: four-door saloon. **Engines:** four-cylinder, 20-valve, turbocharged 1.8-litre giving 150bhp; six-cylinder 2.8-litre giving 193bhp and 2.4-litre V6 giving 165bhp. 1.9-litre TDI direct injection diesel will be added to range shortly after launch.

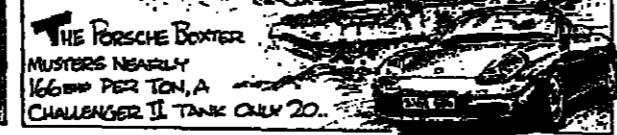
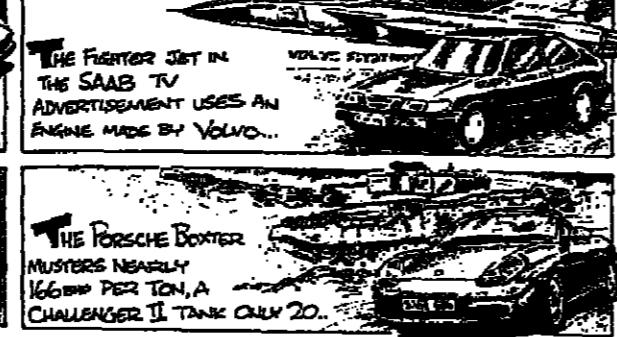
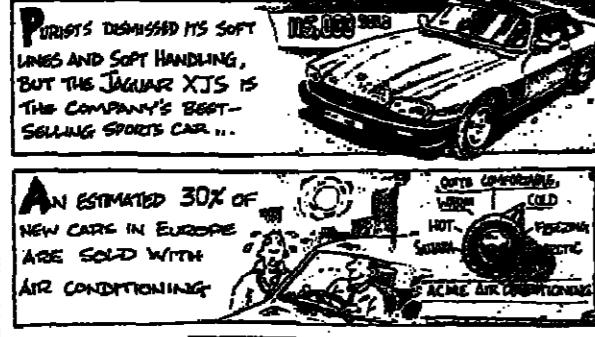
Interior: will include electronic climate control and remote central locking as standard. **Price:** to be announced.

Another big contender in the executive car market was unveiled this week when Audi released the first photographs of its all-new A6. It will go on sale in Britain in May and the company is expecting to sell 4,000 of this model in its first full year, writes Alan Cope.

In the first place, the car will offer a choice of four-cylinder, six-cylinder and V6 engines and a direct-injection diesel will be added to the range later. The 2.4-litre V6 is a new design and will deliver 165bhp. Models with the 2.8-litre six-cylinder engine come in both front-wheel drive and the highly rated four-wheel drive.

Styling of the car bears a strong family resemblance to the A4 which has been Audi's major standard-bearer over the past year. The company promises a high specification level with all models featuring lightweight alloy wheels, remote central locking and air-conditioning as standard.

AUTOFAX by Les Evans and David Long



LONDON
M4 junctions 1-2 Chiswick area: major roadworks, also on the elevated section and the entry and exit slips. Closures on A4 in both directions. A306 Hammersmith Bridge closed both ways. A3 Kingston: northbound lane closed between Shannor Corner and Coombe Lane Junction. M1 junction 2 Hendon: major roadworks with no access to or from A1. A408 Upper Edmonton: roadworks over the Lee Valley Viaduct. A3212 Westminster Bridge closed overnight and weekends. A232 Wallington: roadworks and width restrictions.

SCOTLAND
A96 Bridge of Don: roadworks affecting the traffic in both directions. M8 junction 2: lane closures on the roundabout at Junction 2 (Newbridge Spur, M9). Regular delays on all approaches. A8 Edinburgh: lane closures off-peak. A701 Edinburgh: contraflow between Old Burdiehouse Road and Janefield off-peaks. A92 Tay Road Bridge: maintenance work at the bridges and lane closures southbound. M60 junction 5: contraflow. A389 Bodmin: roadworks. A48 Hill Street, Lydney: temporary lights. A36 Christchurch Bypass: lane closure. M5 junction 13: roadworks with only one lane open at the junction with the A419. M5 junctions 26-27: lane closed in both directions. M5 junctions 23-22: lane closed.

SOUTH EAST

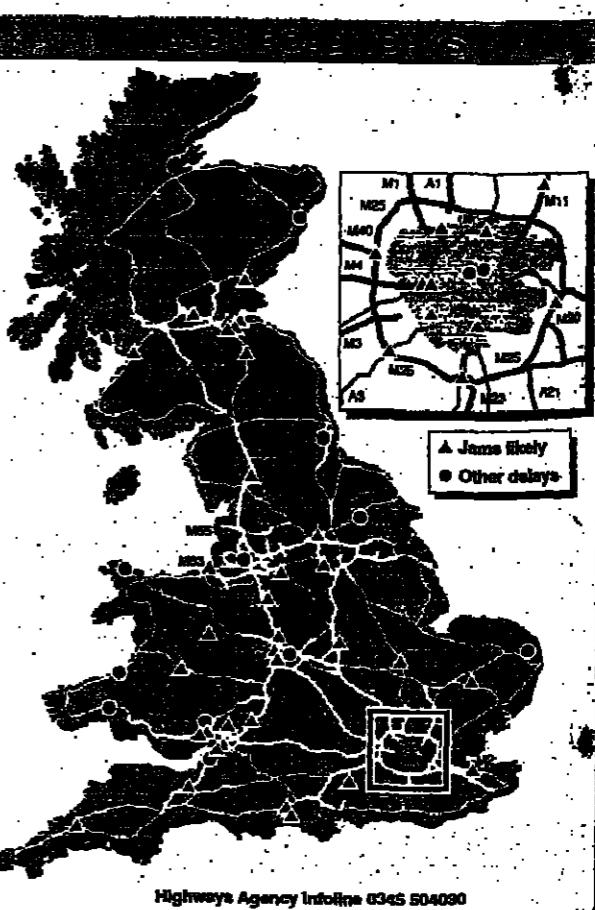
M4 junctions 1a-2: roadworks with contraflow. M11 junctions 8-4: lanes closed. A31 Ringwood: roadworks with contraflow. M25 junctions 10-12: lane and hard shoulder closed, both ways. M25 junction 2: Bexleyheath: southbound lane closures. M25 junctions 6-10: restrictions and lane closures. A3 near Guildford: works at Stag Hill.

SOUTH WEST
M5 junctions 18-19: contraflow. A389 Bodmin: roadworks. A48 Hill Street, Lydney: temporary lights. A36 Christchurch Bypass: lane closure. M5 junction 13: roadworks with only one lane open at the junction with the A419. M5 junctions 26-27: lane closed in both directions. M5 junctions 23-22: lane closed.

WALES

A482 Upper Aberaeron Bridge on South Road is closed for reconstruction work. Diversions via Panteg Road and the A487, where there are also temporary traffic lights. Expect long rush hour delays. A48 Carmarthen: temporary traffic lights and lane restrictions on Pensarn roundabout. A5025 City Docks: one-way system over temporary bridge. M4 width and weight limits. A48 between Langstone and Penhow: temporary traffic lights. A44 between Llanguaig and Eisteddfa Gurig: temporary lights. A458 Pontycoed, Cyfronydd: temporary traffic lights, also affecting the A483. A472 Pontyptwl: contraflow between Pontyptwl and the Heron Roundabout.

NORTH
M6 junctions 37-38: roadworks with a contraflow.



Highways Agency Infotext 0345 504030

The Rev
Vangelis Freeman
Plan for a X

New launch: Kevin Eason on the radical hatchback coupé designed in a flash to outrun the opposition

Powerful Puma — Ford's 135-day wonder

Ford really has torn up the rule book: out goes bland Euro-styling and in comes yet another radical shape that promises to shake up the competition at the cheapest end of the market.

The company this week unveiled the Puma, a coupé based on the chassis and running gear of a Fiesta. However, the coupé gets a new 1.7-litre Zetec SE power plant with 123 brake horse power, which means this little hatchback should have enough puff to outrun the competition from Vauxhall and Renault.

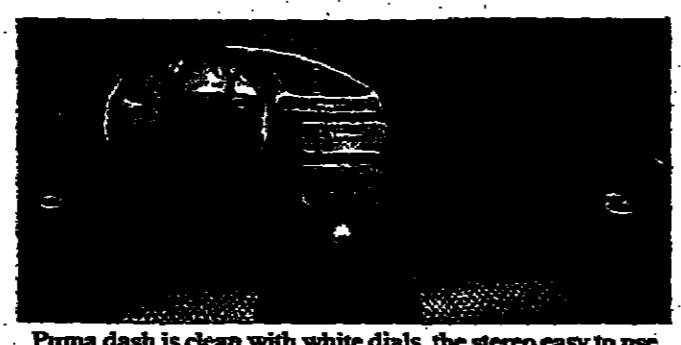
What is heartening though is that Ford has not diverted from its mission to produce some radical new shapes to stick on our high streets. Like the Ka, which the company used to redefine the styling of superminis, the Puma will at least catch the eye, from its big bug-eyed headlamps right to the swept-up tail.

Vauxhall created the new category of mini-coupé with its Tigra, while Renault muscled into the market with a two-door version of the Megane. Ford has traditionally answered with a derivative Fiesta in XR2 or 1.4Si form, but now comes a model specifically targeted at buyers who want a sporty two-door without breaking the bank.

Prices will be announced closer to launch later in the year, but should be pitched at around £15,000 to remain within a pound coin's throw of the Tigra and Megane.

For the money, the car will be quite highly specified and feature

FORD PUMA
Engine: 1.7-litre, 16-valve Zetec SE, delivering 123bhp at 6,300rpm through five-speed transmission to front wheels.
Performance: 0 to 60mph in 8.8 seconds, top speed 126mph.
Fuel consumption: 32.2mpg on European average cycle.
Equipment: Anti-lock brakes, power steering, four diagonal seat belts, large-control stereo.
Price: around £15,000.



Puma dash is clean with white dials, the stereo easy to use

some of the interior cues learned from the Ka experience; so the dash is clean with white dials, the stereo a simple-to-use big-button format model, the seats sculpted and the boot big, though difficult to enter because the lip sits high over the flat rear bumper and is squashed between the three-light rear lamp clusters.

Ford's engineers are said to have

current line-up, planting big 15-inch wheels onto low-profile tyres at the end of a wider track than the Fiesta, stiffening up the chassis and suspension and making the steering more responsive. Anti-lock brakes are standard.

The 1.7-litre Zetec engine is new to the Puma and will deliver peak torque from as low as 1,500rpm, managed through a close-ratio gearbox — topped off with a nifty aluminium knob — which promises

that the Puma will rev freely and offer a sporty drive.

The bigger engine plus extra body weight means that the Puma is six inches longer and weighs in around 50 kilos heavier than the Fiesta. That should not affect the fuel consumption too drastically though, and Ford forecasts that the Puma will need to drink a gallon of unleaded every 38 miles or so on average.

Not that potential customers for this car will be too concerned about petrol bills, for Ford will be looking for those desirable Dimidies (Double Income No Kids) couples who are now the Holy Grail of the car salesmen.

On looks alone, Ford stands a good chance of attracting enough buyers to get rid of the 30,000 to 40,000 it is planning to make at its Fiesta plant at Cologne in Germany, and the Puma gives the company yet another model to add to its ever-expanding line-up.

Significantly, Puma is the first Ford designed entirely by computer and in just 135 days, which means the company will be able to develop even more niche models from existing chassis at low cost and remarkably quickly.

Fords now start with the Ka and go all the way to the big, bulky and American-made Explorer 4x4. With a mini people-mover scheduled for production at Halewood on Merseyside, Ford is clearly aiming to plug every niche gap in the market in its quest for profitability.



Ford based the Puma on Fiesta chassis, but created a novel look for the Zetec-engined coupé

How Sara's company-car driving skills beat the Road Safety Minister

Alan Copps almost tackles the tricky course at the launch of this year's Times/Lease Plan competition

There could be no better illustration of the virtues of driver training. Sara Copeland is head of human resources for Habitat and, like all other employees of the firm provides with a company car, she went on a one-day driving course.

So when we invited her to help launch our annual search for The Times/Lease Plan Company Car Driver of the Year, we were expecting a demonstration of skill and control. Sara provided just that: despite a degree of nervousness at forsaking her usual Audi Coupé for the Nissan Primera Sri which will be used by this year's entrants, she gave a demonstration of smooth, calm driving to beat three men around a course of cones which included two tricky three-point turns and a slalom. The catch? On the Nissan's bonnet was a large plastic saucer with a light-weight ball inside and the trick was to get round the course without spilling the ball.

Sara got round the course without hesitation in just two minutes and four seconds. Now is the chance for you or

your company to match her skill. More and more women are joining the ranks of company car drivers and we hope Sara's example will encourage many of them to take part in this year's competition.

There is a month in which companies great or small can enter for the regional heats by filling in the form below. All you need is three willing drivers, aged over 24 who have a car or use of a car provided as part of their remuneration. Each team entry has to be endorsed by a company director or fleet manager.

The finals, at the Silverstone Driving Centre, are a rare chance to experience the excitement of driving under expert supervision at the home of the British Grand Prix. The individual winner will win a trip for two to the Portuguese Grand Prix and the winning team will be offered driver training for 12 employees and the use of a Nissan vehicle for three months.



John Bowis: came third

which also trains Habitat's company car drivers.

First to try the course, in appalling weather, was John Bowis, the Minister for Road Safety, who had come to demonstrate the Government's backing for the competition, which is now in its fourth year. The contest aims to heighten awareness of the need for skill and care among those who may cover many tens of thousands of miles during a year's work.

More and more large firms are beginning to invest in training to help erase that reputation for devil-may-care driving which dogs the company car motorist. Mr Bowis and others concerned with road safety are well aware that even a few hours' instruction in anticipating the hazards of the road can dramatically reduce insurance premiums and the risk of expensive repairs or, worse, injuries and absence from work.

With the disadvantage of being first — and although he is used to an automatic — Mr Bowis took the Nissan around the course with great skill recording a time of two minutes and ten seconds. Vahid Daemi, managing director of Lease Plan, Europe's leading vehicle management company, went round in two minutes 17 seconds and was commended by Chris Howell for his steady style. Then Sara

set the pace.

Although Chris was keeping the times close to his chest, your correspondent was impressed by the speed and smoothness of all three, and realised he'd been set a hard task. The car went round and round in the saucer and the last cone of the slalom went flying, incurring a five-second penalty.

I did manage to complete the fastest round, in exactly two minutes, but that penalty was enough to ensure that Sara proved her point.

It's a competition about safety, not speed, but even so seconds count. Fill in the form and give it a try...



Sara Copeland, our launch winner, proved the value of her employer's training policy

Four-wheel winning driver

■ THE WINNER of our competition for a drive in a Land Rover at the *Midland Auto Trader Four-Wheel-Drive Day* on March 1 is Mrs Janet Griffith of Shrewsbury, Shropshire. She correctly answered our question: the first Land Rover was unveiled in 1948.

She wins the use of a Land Rover provided by Marshalls of Peterborough and accommodation for two over the weekend at the Haycock Hotel, Wansford, Peterborough from which the day-long event, one of the best of its kind, starts next Saturday. If you were not lucky enough to win and have access to a suitable four-wheel-drive vehicle there is still time to enter by telephoning Cranium Communications on 01780 766966. Entries close on Tuesday.

Car cover up

■ PAY-OUTS ON motor insurance claims last year were higher than expected and could lead to premium rises of between 3 and 10 per cent this year, according to insurers Touchline. In 1995 premiums fell by up to 20 per cent as direct insurers brought fierce competition to the market, but Touchline says they must now go up to meet the increased cost of claims.

Rather no Moss

■ STIRLING MOSS has asked us to point out that he will not be taking part in July's race recreation at the historic Rheims circuit in France, as we reported on January 11. However, the organisers are still seeking entries and anyone interested should contact Trisha Pilkington on 01803 722257.

Fittipaldi festival

■ EMERSON FITTIPALDI, Brazil's double world champion, is to drive a Penske Indycar as part of a large American presence at this year's Goodwood Festival of Speed in June. More information: 01243 787766.

Entry Form



• About your company

Name of entrant: _____
Mr/ Mrs Entrant should be director/ senior manager responsible for the company's car fleet

Company name: _____

Address: _____

Post code: _____

Nature of business: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Fax number: _____

Number of company cars: _____

• Nominated drivers

	Surname	Job title	Forename	Age	Points on licence (max 3)
1					
2					
3					
4					

• Competition rules

The closing date for entries is March 28 1997. Drivers must be 24 years of age or over to enter. Only corporate entries will be accepted. Drivers must be nominated in teams of three. The entrant may also nominate himself/herself as part of the team. Companies can only enter one team. Competitors must drive a company car or vehicle as part of their remuneration package. Qualification for the team/company award will be dependent upon a written test to be completed by the entrant at their regional heat. Employees of Lease Plan, DriveTech, and Nissan, News International and the Biddest Group are not permitted to enter. In the spirit of the competition, competitors who reached the final in two previous consecutive years, specialist organisations such as driver training companies, police, the armed forces and the like are not permitted to enter. A place in the regional heats will be confirmed in writing at least ten days prior to the heat. In the event of over-subscription, qualification to the regional heats will be judged through a random driver telephone questionnaire. If the entrant does not qualify the entrant will be informed in writing prior to the heat. Feedback on each driver's performance will be available after the competition. The entrant other will be called upon at the regional heat should one of the first three drivers be unable to compete. In the event of a finalist not being able to compete in the final, the next highest scoring driver from the regional heats will be invited to compete in their place. The prize for the winner will be a special trip for two to the Portuguese Grand Prix. The team/company prize will be a driver training programme for 12 employees and the use of a Nissan vehicle for three drivers. Cash alternatives are not available. The judge's decision is final.

• Which venue?

Please select your 1st and 2nd choice location/date of regional heat (indicate 1 or 2 in box):

Estree, Herts

Friday, 25 April

Macclesfield, Cheshire

Friday, 9 May

Bracknell, Berks

Friday, 16 May

Nottingham

Friday, 30 May

Gatwick, Surrey

Friday, 6 June

Coventry

Friday, 13 June

You must ensure that entrant and nominated drivers are able for both first and second choice dates and for the final at Silverstone on Friday, 4 July 1997. Initial qualification may be by telephone questionnaire. Entrants and drivers will be contacted on an individual basis.

Once you have completed this form, fax it back to Lease Plan on 01753 620676 or post to Marketing Dept, Lease Plan, Thames Side, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 1TY. For further information call Lease Plan on 01753 797284

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Northfield Audi 01666 502473

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91 L 80 2.0 E Estate, Indigo Red, Wh.

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91 M 80 1.9 T SE Estate, Ruby Red

91 M 80 1.9 T Saloon, Prol. Wh. Wh. alloy

£11,995

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Wooden racer goes under the hammer

Alan Copps on the racing car made out of wood that took Jackie Stewart to glory

What is probably the last wooden car to win a serious motor race — it was driven by three-times world champion Jackie Stewart to a number of early victories — is to be sold at auction today by the man who designed it.

Jen Marsh, founder of Marcos cars, says: "The only exams I passed at public school were English and woodwork, so it's not surprising my first cars were made of wood. It's a tremendously light and strong material.

"You can repair it quickly, too, so long as it doesn't splinter. I once got a rear wheel off the track going round Clearways corner at Brands Hatch. I spun across the wet grass, collecting all the concrete posts from a wire retaining fence, eventually knocking the back off the car. But it came off in one piece, I glued it on again in the paddock and went on to win another race."

The 1960 gullwing-doored Marcos sports racing coupe was one of the success stories of GT racing in its time. Its weird appearance, frog eyes, notched-back and four-piece



Jen Marsh and the third Marcos he made, in 1959

windscreen, cloaked an even more peculiar chassis, a tub made of marine plywood. But the unusual construction ensured extreme light weight, and with an early Cosworth engine the car was astonishingly successful. It dominated its class until the brilliant

Colin Chapman sorted out a racing version of his glass-fibre Lotus Elite, a beautiful car that played swan to the Marcos's ugly duckling.

The car to be sold tonight at Brooks's auction at London's Olympia has an extraordinary history. "It's been part of my life," says Marsh. "It was the third car we made chassis number 1003. I've had great fun racing it myself but my factory's so busy now I need the space. I'm hoping it might go to a museum."

The Marcos company, based in Westbury, Wiltshire, and still run by Marsh and his sons, is one of Britain's most successful specialist sports car manufacturers with a full order book for its current Manara and LM models.

The car to be sold is one of only six Mk 1 GTs to be built. It carries an estimate of £20,000-£25,000. "I drove it to Scotland where it was paid for by Barry Filer, a director of Courtaulds, and then delivered to Jackie Stewart when no one had heard of him outside Scotland. He'd done a few races in an Austin Healey Sprite, but he won some of his first races in this car," says Marsh.



Jackie Stewart won some of his first races in this car, made of marine plywood and stuck together with glue, with an early Cosworth engine

The chassis and most of the bodywork of the car is wood, mainly 1½-in. marine plywood. The bonnet is made of glassfibre. The construction was pioneering at a time when even Formula One cars were still built around a space frame of steel tubing. Jackie

Stewart raced it throughout 1961 and 1962 and then moved on to higher things. It was bought by Jack Gates, who entered and won nine races. Then it disappeared.

But in 1976, Jen Marsh found the car lying neglected in a garage yard. "I rebuilt it

then I started racing it myself in historic events. I've won more than 100 times in the 24-hour endurance race at Le Mans. "I'm still chairman of Marcos and we're now running the team from the factory. That's my retirement job," says Marsh.

Brooks's sale starts at noon at Olympia 2, London W6 0J7/244 9941. Sotheby's sell a collection of memorabilia in New Bond Street, London W1 on Wednesday at 2pm (0171-408 5663).

DR DASHBOARD

Has the RAC changed sides?

Q Forgive me doctor. I always thought RAC meant Royal Automobile Club. Now I hear that they are taking up the cause of cyclists and pedestrians. Can this be true?

A You're right. At a conference earlier this week to celebrate the organisation's centenary, the RAC decided that in future it should represent all road users rather than just motorists.

Q Whatever next? Will the AA become the Anti-mobile Association? Who's going to stick up for the poor old motorist against the New Age travellers, bureaucrats and environmentalists?

A The RAC says that lots of its members walk and cycle as well as drive. And remember, the AA had its origins as a team of cyclists who warned pioneer drivers about speed traps on the London-Brighton road.

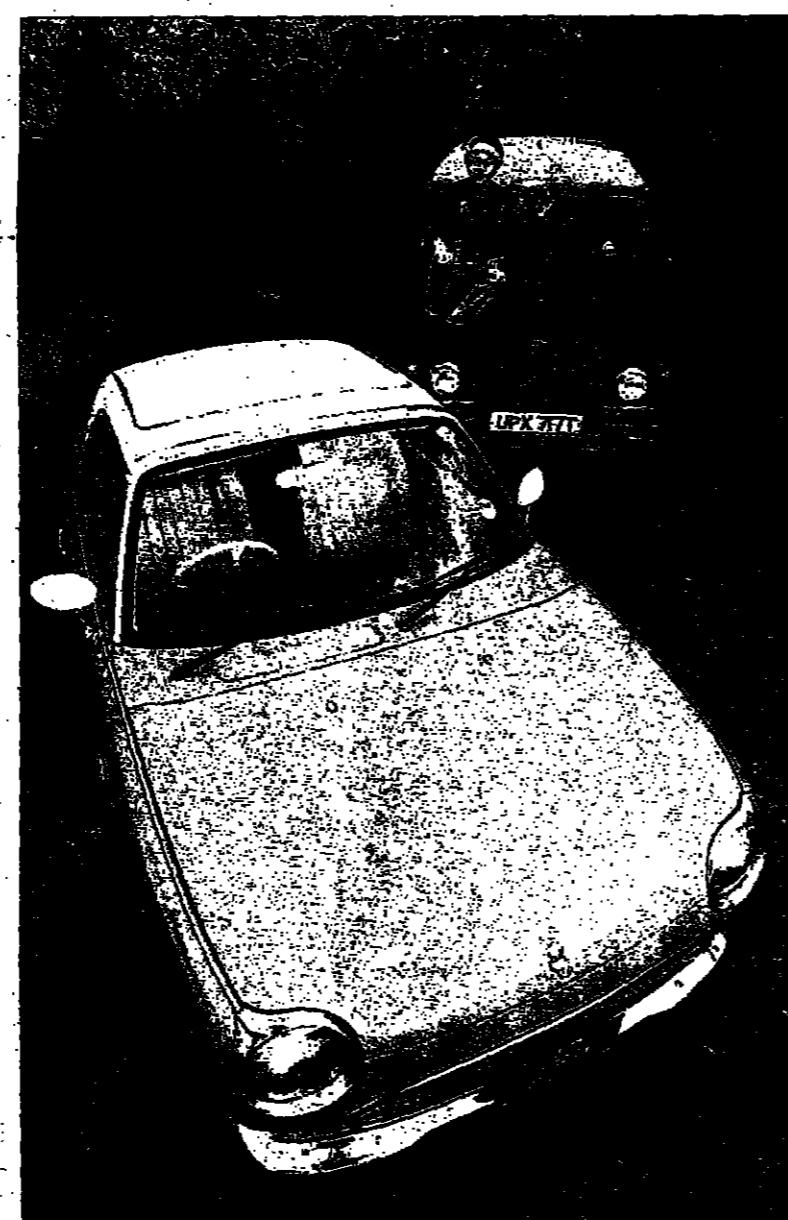
Q Well we all have to walk sometimes, but I'd rather drive any day. Does that make me old-fashioned?

A It seems so. The RAC based its decision on a poll of members that showed them strongly in favour of pedestrianisation in town centres, better public transport and more space on the roads for cyclists.

Q That sounds familiar. I seem to remember reading something along those lines in *Car 97*.

A That's true. Our own poll last week showed that very large numbers of motorists are saying the same thing. It's the result of an overwhelming concern about pollution and congestion in our cities. But we do believe in giving the motorist a say, so soon we'll be printing a selection of ideas put forward by driving advocates in our traffic debate.

Street-fashion creator Wayne Hemingway tells Andrew Pierce why he hates ostentatious road-users



Hemingway with rag-top Land Rover and limited-edition Nissan Figaro

Clothes king loses rag at macho adverts

Wayne Hemingway, one of Britain's most successful fashion designers, will be among the star turns at London Fashion Week which opens tomorrow.

Hemingway is the creative force behind the street-wear label, Red or Dead. He founded the company 15 years ago with his wife Gerardine, selling second-hand clothes in Camden market in North London. He is now creative director and chairman of the company and a self-made millionaire.

How did you first learn to drive?

I was brought up in a pub and earned enough money to buy a car at 16. I drove it round and round the car park and took my test three days after my 17th birthday. I was convinced I had taught myself. I was wrong. I failed. I passed six weeks later, having had some real lessons.

What was your first car?

A Hillman Hunter. Followed rapidly by a bright orange Capri with bucket seats and a racing steering wheel. I crashed the Hillman on the way to school.

What car do you drive now and why?

When I am being a sensible

father, I drive a Toyota Previa. For fun I have a 1950s rag-top Land Rover. I also have a limited edition Nissan Figaro which I bought in Japan.

Do you like driving?

Only if there is something good on the radio. Otherwise I find it tedious. There are far better things to do in life.

What is your most hated car?

Ostentatious status symbols such as the Rolls-Royce. It is ugly and screams out boring old rich fart. Modern Porsches are the ultimate laughable status symbol.

What is your dream car?

One that can fly and is amphibious at the same time.

What is your worst habit in the car?

Not supporting my wife, Gerardine, when she is driving and screaming at the kids to behave. I just keep on reading a magazine.

What infuriates you most about other drivers?

I love all of them. I have road happiness.

What is the most unusual thing you have done in your car?

I changed a fuse on my own, only last week. This was highly unusual.

Have you ever had points on your licence?

When I was 17, doing 50mph on a 40mph urban motorway. All my mates were drunk and rowdy. The policeman was incredulous at my explanation that I had drunk four bottles of chocolate milk. He beatened me. Then my mates gave him four empty bottles of chocolate milk. He nicked me for speeding instead.

What do you listen to in the car?

Radio 1: the evening show with Jo Wiley and Steve Lamacq. Football on Radio 5 Live.

If you were Secretary of State for Transport, what is the first thing you would do?

A dramatic increase in car tax, and road tolls that encouraged everyone who can to use a public transport system that has been improved by the levies.

What is your favourite car advertisement?

The directors of the commercials seem to think that all car drivers lust after speed and regard the car as a penis extension. Unlike me.

CAR...TOONS



Boring road puts drivers to sleep

By Paul Marston, Transport Correspondent

A STRETCH of dual carriageway suspected of being so boring that it makes drivers fall asleep is to be investigated by the Government's Highways Agency.

The eastbound route of the A180 between the outskirts of Scunthorpe and Grimsby Docks has a sleep-related accident rate two-and-a-half times the national average.

Research carried out by Loughborough University for Humberside police suggested that drivers tended to relax because they were nearing the end of their journey, and then had difficulty in staying awake because the road was so unstimulating.

Prof Jim Horne, head of the university's sleep research team, said that the view along the 20-mile road was exceptionally tedious.

"It's pretty dull and boring, and often not very busy, so drivers don't even have the stimulation of other traffic to keep them going," he said. "It's also very flat, and a lot of

it has embankments running alongside. At night, it's not lit, so you can't see much."

Maybe it's just their cars.

The Daily Telegraph 11/2/97

